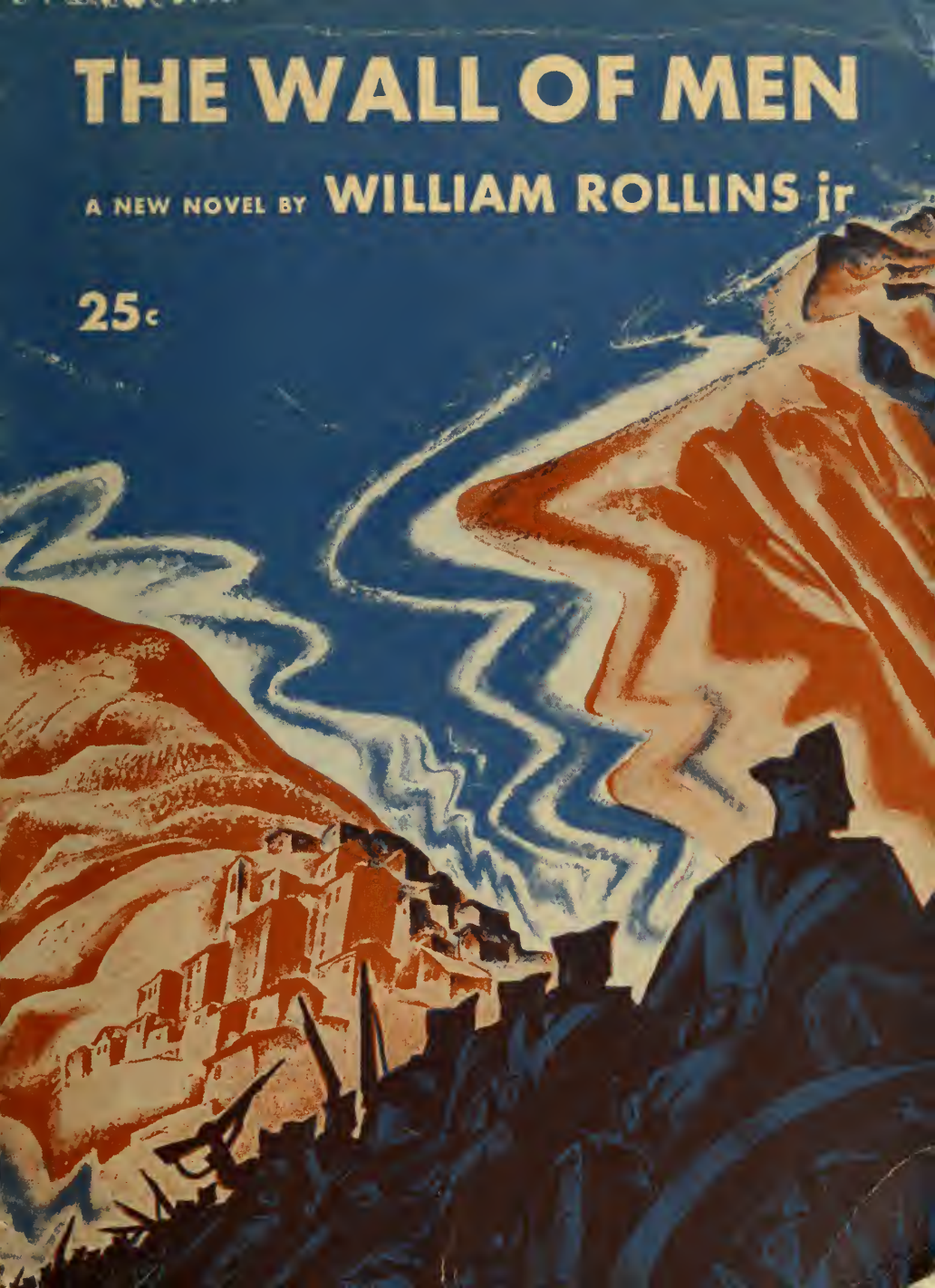
THE WALL OF MEN

A NEW NOVEL BY **WILLIAM ROLLINS jr**

25¢



From the collection of the

Prelinger Library

San Francisco, California
2008

THE WALL OF MEN

William Rollins, jr

MODERN AGE BOOKS, INC., NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT 1938 BY WILLIAM ROLLINS, JR.

PUBLISHED BY MODERN AGE BOOKS, INC.

[BMG-UOPWA 18]

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review to be printed in a magazine or newspaper.

Composed and printed in the United States of America by Union Labor
AT THE RUMFORD PRESS, CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Typography by Robert Josephy

This book makes no pretense to be other than a romance with the present Spanish war as a setting. The military action throughout is fictional.

1. THE CAR swung around the mountain along the smooth highway, and the village of Morino suddenly appeared below, tumbling down to the sea; a peaceful fishing community in a peaceful Spain.

"Draw up!" commanded the man in the black beret.

"*Muy bien, capitán.*" They slowed to a halt. It was an open car, yet for all the July heat, the top was up and the flaps all drawn. The man in the black beret drew his curtain partly aside and glanced down at the village.

Hugging a small round harbor, it rose from the cold green Bay of Biscay, above black rocks and swirling frothing water: six- and seven-storied tenements, deep blues, greens, and browns in color, flat roof above flat roof, until at last the bare mountain shot up beyond them, scraggy green and rocky, into the lowering clouds. Directly below the highway, in the square, bright colored crowds moved about, gossiping, arguing, or else watching the game in the pelota court alongside. The man in the black beret, too, watched the four pelota players.

Finally he turned to the man beside him.

"These Basques have good tough bodies," he muttered. "Watch that fellow in back there. He swings his basket like — like —"

The driver grinned.

"Like a grenade, *capitán?*" he asked.

The two men slouching in the back of the car chuckled. The man in the black beret turned back to the game.

"With his assurance he could swing a regiment," he muttered. "His partner," he added, after a moment, "is not so brilliant; but he is . . ." he hesitated, "sure. You know where he stands," he finished. He raised his eyes, followed the curve of the highway around to the large old church at the end of the village, lifting deep brown above a massive stone arcade that ran along the harbor's edge. Stretched drying, along the length of the balcony above the colonnade, were gigantic, lacelike fishing nets, brown as the church and curving down almost to the stone quay. Beyond the church, the bare highway continued a hundred yards; then swung around the mountain, out of sight. The man jerked his head back.

"There she is," he murmured, "drive along! I'll get off at the parish house. You —" he swung around to a man in back, a thin-faced man with a harelip, "you'll go down and take a walk around the village. You others drive on around the bend and wait till I send for you." He pulled the curtain in place as the car moved forward. There was the sound of cheering in the square below; but already a line of heavy-scented chestnut trees had hidden it from view.

If the stranger's unobtrusive visit to the parish house was to do honor to the Magdalene on this, her feast day, he was practically alone in that performance. For most of the neighboring fisherfolk and peasants were celebrating the fiesta by crowding near the pelota court, watching the phenomenal playing of Rafael Aznar. They followed him intently as he sped across the court, or leaped, with the grace and power of an animal, for the rebounding ball; they tried to follow the ball as it shot out of his basket, too swift, almost, for sight. And when, during rare pauses, he ignored their applause, they accepted that unresentingly, as the becoming hauteur of a hero.

His partner, Jose Aldez, was only too willing to render all honors to Aznar. Aldez was a good player; he would have been outstanding on most courts. But it was enough for him to be a harmonious second to his spectacular friend; it was enough that Aznar had chosen him as partner and companion in their growing years. And while he stood, his slender body poised, always ready, he was also aware of his friend's every movement.

"*Virgen santísima!*" he would tell himself, over and over, "what a play! what a beautiful player he is!" And at Aznar's last high leap and cannonball return that ended the game, Jose Aldez joined in the applause that reached to the car passing on the highway above.

Aznar did not appear to hear that applause. Tall, dark, handsome, he seemed engrossed in unstrapping the basket from his wrist; though a tiny smile that flickered on his lips widened as his two defeated opponents slipped by him into the square. Here, the game over, young men in black, tight-fitting holiday suits, berets over one ear, shouted and laughed among themselves, or cracked jokes at groups of bareheaded, brightly dressed girls who pretended not to hear. Older men sat around the four tables before the little café opposite, black vests open to ease their paunches, now banging their mugs of cider or red

wine on the table to clinch an argument, now drinking deep from them. Village matrons, released for the moment from their broiling tenements, huddled in far corners for decorous conversations. Kids strutted, babies crawled underfoot with the assurance of Spanish children.

This was the accustomed fiesta noise. And it was when it suddenly ceased, when a hush came over the square, that Aznar, busy with his leather strap, looked up.

The young people weren't kidding any more. Those who did talk, spoke in lowered voices. And all eyes were either turned on the bakery next to the café, or uneasily on Aznar himself. Aznar raised himself on his toes.

Over the heads of the crowd, he could see a young man, one of the visitors with the team from Santa Lucia, standing before the bakery, intimately close to a girl who gazed steadily, unsmilingly, before her. Aznar hurled aside his basket. Eyes blazing, he strode out, across the square, while the crowd silently made way for him.

When he reached the couple, the young man, tall as himself, turned. He looked Aznar up and down.

"You seem out of breath, *amigo*," he murmured. His eyes were watery with wine.

Aznar did not speak. His jaws were tight, his body tense. Those who knew him moved slightly back. But the man from Santa Lucia laughed.

"So the lady is your *novia*, Señor Aznar?" he went on. "I admire your taste!" Suddenly he bent and kissed the girl on the cheek.

The girl, Dolores Gracia, cried out in annoyance. But nobody heard her. There was a *crack!* and the man from Santa Lucia staggered back. Even while he was recovering himself, a knife gleamed in his hand.

Aznar's laugh was short. He met the other's rush more than half way. A second *crack*.

The Santa Lucian's knife hand swung wide, and immediately he was on his back, Aznar on top of him, one knee on his chest, hands clutching the man's right arm. While neither made a sound, Aznar pressed that arm across his knee to break it.

It seemed long to the motionless crowd, though it was hardly a minute. Aznar, holding the extended arm, pressed down with taut muscles, while the other beat helplessly with his free fist, his breath

coming noisily. Then he dropped the knife, Aznar pounced on it, and swung upward.

"Rafael, you imbecile! *eres un imbécil!*"

Aznar did not look up. He only snarled, trying to free himself. But his friend, Aldez, clung to the upraised arm.

"Let it go, you fool!" Aldez dropped to his knees to face Aznar while he struggled with him. "Listen, do you want to hang for it?" he snapped. "You've given him enough. Now quit . . ." Jerkily, he kept on pleading. And at last the pressure gave way; the fire died from Aznar's eyes. He stood up, shut the knife and slipped it in his hip pocket, gave the ashen-faced young man a shove with his foot, and walked away.

Jose Aldez looked down as the young man pulled himself to his knees.

"You better start moving," he said shortly. "Maybe I wouldn't be able to stop him another time." His tone wasn't cordial. Rafael Aznar was his friend, and anyhow, he didn't like fellows who tried to get intimate with Dolores Gracia. He stood, solemn eyes in his pale, thin face, under tangled brown hair, watching the Santa Lucian's departure. Then, slowly, he turned to look across the square.

He could see Rafael and Dolores in a far corner, close together. The villagers had long accepted that their prettiest girl belonged to the leader of the boys; and though it wasn't so acceptable to some of the young men, they were right now giving the couple a wide berth. Jose walked slowly toward them.

He saw they had been arguing. But when he came up, Dolores smiled at him.

"Hello, Jose," she said. Her little smile vanished. "I'm glad you stopped Rafael from . . ." Her voice trailed off.

Jose muttered something, tried to smile, and kicked at the pavement. It was always hard for him to speak to Dolores. Just seeing her large, wondering black eyes looking at him made something tighten inside. Rafael swung around. His face was still white and set.

"Be careful next time you mix up in my business," he said through tight lips. "Next time maybe I'll forget you're my friend."

Jose shrugged.

"What do you always want to kill a man for?" he demanded. "Just because —"

Rafael's eyes blazed again. He took a step forward.

"Just because what?" he asked, in clipped tones. "I take it nowadays a man can't protect his girl's honor in Spain! Maybe you and this *Liga de la Juventud*, or whatever it is you're running, are going to start this free love business!" His voice rose. "Now you've already started trying to grab the Marquesa de Valera and other rich people's land away from them, you're going to start taking our girls, too! Is that it?"

People nearby had been trying to hear, but at the mention of "land grabbing," they turned away. Jose, however, laughed. He pulled out his cigarettes and passed one to Rafael.

"Sure, Rafael," he agreed, "that's what it's all about."

Rafael hesitated; then took the cigarette. His face was still set, but he smiled a little.

"I didn't mean *you'd* do that, Jose," he muttered. "You're the only fellow I'd trust around here." He laughed; clamped his hand on Jose's shoulder. "Best partner a pelota player ever had!" he declared to Dolores. "Never play the way I do, if I didn't know he was back of me!" His face tightened again. "But those other fellows!" he told Jose; "if I ever — " He swung back to Dolores. "Where's that locket you promised me for the games?" he demanded.

Lighting his cigarette, Jose saw Dolores's eyes widen.

"You *asked* for it, Rafael," she corrected him, "but I didn't promise it to you."

"You mean —" Rafael's eyes narrowed, "you mean you're not going to give it to me?"

Dolores looked at him in silence. Then, quietly, she removed the cheap link locket from her neck. She weighed it, thoughtfully.

"I'll give it to you," she commenced slowly, "if you want it badly. Only —"

"Then give it to me." Rafael snatched it and the chain broke.

Jose involuntarily stepped forward at Dolores's exclamation. But Rafael's face cleared, and he smiled ruefully.

"I'm sorry, Dolores," he said. "I guess I've got a rotten temper. But I'll get you another. Come on!" he cried, taking her arm. "They'll be starting the games soon!"

Jose stood looking after them. For years he had hero-worshipped his older friend, but for once he wasn't pleased by Rafael's words of trust.

"Why should he 'trust' me?" he muttered. "He doesn't own

Dolores!" Some day in Spain, even if they were friends, there'd be nothing to stop his talking to Dolores, taking walks with her — nothing — except maybe Dolores, he thought with a little grin.

His smile wasn't too gay, though, and he kicked at the ground. Then he saw six inches of tiny broken link, and stooped quickly to pick it up. He looked at it a second, and thought of her oval face, so delicate he had always wanted to run his fingertips along the clear olive skin, her slender body he so often imagined himself holding tight and protectively. And all the time he was moving his fingers, slowly, across the broken link in his hand. Suddenly he looked up and smiled.

"Even today in Spain, they can't stop me from *thinking* about it, anyhow," he said to himself, as he started up the square.

A man with a harelip, leaning inconspicuously in a nearby doorway, also smiled. He pulled himself erect; stretched.

"So we've found the young leader of the *Liga de la Juventud* quicker than we hoped for. The captain will be glad to hear that . . . And he seems sort of fond of the local hero's *novia*." The man pulled out a cigarette and lit it. "That may be useful to know, too," he muttered, snapping the match away.

2.

THERE was a small unlighted bulb in the ceiling; but otherwise the study was as it had been two hundred years earlier, when the parish house was built. The gray light from the two deep-set casement windows, high overhead, glinted on the great, age-worn oak table, and on the two men who leaned over it, small glasses of red wine, untouched, in their hands.

The deep lines on the thin face of Father Mario were deepened by that light, his mouth almost lost in the shadow of his long, hawk's nose. The smooth expressionless face of the stranger was smoother in the glow, while his sharp black eyes caught the gleam in dagger-points, save when he lowered them, now and then, to watch his strong stubby fingers play a silent tattoo on his black beret that lay on the table.

Only one other person was in the closed room — an aged, white-haired priest, Father Pedro, whom the white light made appear almost ethereal, and who sat, straight and motionless, in a chair against the wall. The men by the table did not notice him, however; their eyes scarcely left each other's face.

"You realize, then, Father, that the struggle is imminent — that the crisis is at hand?" The stranger's voice was pleasant; low, but firm.

Father Mario cleared his throat.

"I have had some inkling of it," he replied, in a thin voice. "Others of your people have come to me recently —" he smiled slyly, "asking me careful questions."

The stranger smiled back.

"Yes. We had to try you out, to make sure of you. All over the country we have been testing the clergy and other — right people. But now it is at hand, the blow is about to be struck! Today, today probably, our troops are flying across the Straits, and *right now, maybe* —" his fingers closed in a tight fist, "the General is landing in the south! We've got to put down this rabble! We've got to stick together and fight for our rights, our property —"

"— and God," Father Mario hurriedly interrupted.

"Of course, of course, above all for God and Holy Church!"

"And those Moorish soldiers who are landing in the south," came a deep voice from against the wall, "are they, too, servants of God and His Church?"

The stranger twisted around.

"We intend to see to that right away, Father," he quickly replied. "In fact we're bringing them over largely to show them the benefits of Holy Church." He turned back to the curate. "But you see how important it is to be prepared all over the country," he went on, leaning forward, "and in the Basque country, where so many are supersti —"

Father Mario coughed noisily.

"— intensely religious," the other continued unabashed, "we expect much help. Particularly around this village of Morino." He was leaning even closer now, his words were slow and distinct. "Small as it is, it is a vital point between the cities of Bilbao and San Sebastian. We know much about it physically, and in other respects. The military and higher clergy have helped us —" He heard an uneasy movement behind him, "— for the grace of God," he added, and went on, "but these people could hinder us far more than their numbers warrant, and we are turning to you —" he paused, "to *you*, to give us more personal information, and to help, shall we say, show your flock the light."

The curate glanced quickly up at the vicar.

"Father," he said, reproachfully; "it is the hour of the *Rosario*."

"But it is you, my son," replied the other, "who should conduct the service. I am old, and after my long Mass, it wearies me."

"And you would let your infirmities interfere with your duty, when I have the Church's business to attend to here?"

The old man dragged himself to his feet.

"Perhaps you are right." He started for the door, then turned. "God and His Church do not call for the blood of innocent people, my son," he said in his deep voice.

"The blood of innocent people?" The stranger, twisting around, looked shocked. "But you don't understand, Father. It's the people we're calling together! A — a sort of election!"

"I see." For a moment a sardonic light appeared in the kindly old eyes. "'And few shall be chosen'." He gazed at the stranger until the latter lowered his eyes. Then he silently left the room.

"If," said Father Mario, querulously, "you have to be a vile atheist, you might be respectfully silent in the presence of the cloth — particularly Father Pedro, who is the most beloved man between San Sebastian and Bilbao! With him against you, no one in the countryside would lift a finger for your cause!"

"So?" murmured the stranger. He seemed to make a mental note. Then, all at once, he raised his eyebrows in mild rebuke. "An atheist, you call me? My dear Father, you forget we are the Defenders of the Faith! Even the Moors automatically become Christian crusaders when they throw their first grenade." He leaned on his elbow, becoming serious. "Tell me," he demanded, "the situation here."

For an hour or more the priest talked, while the stranger listened intently. The men here, for the most part, Father Mario explained, while giving religion its due, were not fanatic. Too, the government's promises of more land and better working conditions were having a disturbing effect upon the people, and already militant groups had started a program of seizing the large estates. "Though I will say," the priest added, "so far, it seems to me, the government itself has done little more than talk." And for that reason, his own impassioned appeal to save the Church from the infidel Reds might have little effect.

"But the crisis has already reached us here," he concluded. "The land thieves are at work, as I say, and only immediate drastic measures can counteract them." He gazed down at the table, waiting. At last the stranger spoke.

"I see," he murmured. He paused, drumming noiselessly. "Suppose," he commenced, slowly, "suppose the Church was unfortunate enough to receive some grave indignity, something to drive the seriousness of things home." He stopped, as Father Mario glanced quickly up with frightened eyes.

For a moment the men regarded each other. Then the stranger raised his glass and drained the untouched wine. The priest lowered his eyes again.

"Morino, as I have told you," said the stranger, setting his glass down, "is a vital spot to us. An indignity to the Church here, unfortunate as it would be, would be better than the loss of the entire nation, do you not believe? Loss to Rome, even, possibly?"

The priest did not answer, did not move.

"You believe it would be better, do you not?" the other softly persisted.

Slowly, Father Mario raised his head. His voice sounded weary when he spoke.

"It would be better," he replied.

3. A KNOCK on the door interrupted them. Davido, the pink-cheeked *monaguillo*, attendant on the priests, noiselessly opened it to usher in a tall, drably dressed young man with a harelip. Despite his civilian clothes, he drew himself up and smartly saluted.

The stranger carelessly returned the salute.

"Looked the village over?" he asked.

"*Sí, capitán*, I have little to report, except impressions."

"We will tend to them later." The stranger turned back to the priest. "And you say your nephew is a leader among the young men in the village?" he asked.

"Absolutely — if I may say it myself." Father Mario lowered his eyes becomingly; then quickly raised them to add: "He is certainly the best athlete around, the best pelota player —"

"Ah," interrupted the stranger, leaning forward; "the pelota player. I saw one in your square this afternoon, a wonder."

"Rafael," said the priest, softly, "is the best in the country round, possibly in all Euzkadi."*

"And is he sufficiently—shall we say, reverent — for our purposes?"

"Rafael," murmured the priest sadly, "does not, perhaps, perform his religious duties with enough enthusiasm. But," he added, hastily, "his heart is in the right place. Wait! I will send for him!" He reached for a bell cord behind him and pulled it.

"And now," went on the stranger, more slowly, "as to enemies among the young men. It is the youth, you know, who will decide everything. You have such — er, unfortunates?"

Father Mario hesitated, running his fingers gently along the sleeve of his cassock.

"There are several such; one in particular who might be harmful," he said, at last. "Curiously enough, he is my nephew's closest friend. A quiet young man, but popular, more popular, I think, than he knows. He is head of some so-called youth movement, a *Liga de la Juventud* —"

"Ah, one of *those*." The stranger stopped as the door softly opened. The young *monaguillo* stood waiting.

"Find my nephew, Rafael Aznar, immediately, and send him to me," commanded the priest. "He's probably in the town square. He usually is."

*The Basque country

The boy silently bowed and disappeared. The priest turned back to the stranger, who was leaning close to him.

"And this young man of whom you speak," the stranger said. His voice was low, but distinct. "As well as being an active Red, he is no doubt anti-clerical? And known as such throughout the neighborhood?"

Jose, meanwhile, had left the square, too low in spirits to wait for the old ceremonial dance of the *arrescu*. In the games, where he usually ended second only to Rafael, he had taken third and fourth places. Now he trudged up the steep cobbled road to the highway, hands dug in the pockets of his brown corduroy trousers, feet kicking aimlessly at the stones.

Today the thought of Dolores had disturbed him more than ever. He thought of her large eyes, solemnly looking at him, her low voice as she thanked him for stopping the fight; he remembered the tingle that ran through him at the time. And then Rafael had snatched the locket from her hand —

"He ought to get his head knocked in," Jose growled, clenching his fists in his pocket and feeling the tiny links.

He reached the highway and turned right, in the direction of San Sebastian. He passed the church and parish house, both seemingly deserted, and rounded the bend where the mountain shot up on one side, and the cliff on the other dropped to the sea far below. He passed a curtained car that hugged the mountainside, in the back seat of which two figures watched him incuriously; but he did not see them. He was thinking:

"And we'll get more than women voting, you'll see!" He was talking to Rafael now. "When we get things going, I won't be working any twelve hours a day in the canning factory for enough to keep patches on my pants! We'll see to it we get enough to live on and the peasants own their own land . . ." He forgot his grievance in his growing interest. He walked faster, improving the world rapidly as he went. The fishermen would own their boats, good boats; the absentee landlord estates would be divided up; his mother would have a sink with real running water, like in the inn. He swooped down on a stone; shied it far into the sea below.

"We'll make Spain a real country, like France and North America!" he said aloud.

He reached a promontory, a little off the road, and walked out on it. He stood, hands in pockets, legs wide apart, looking down.

Way down there was the green sea, cold and sleek. He could see the foam of the wave tops as they lifted themselves and dashed with eternal persistence against the rocky wall directly below, could hear their dull boom, regularly repeated. "Like cannon," he said to himself. He was thinking of rumors he had heard in the last few days. He sank down in the soft grass.

"But they wouldn't dare do it," he thought. "They wouldn't dare attack the government!"

He lay on his back, arms and legs outstretched, feeling the warmth of the sinking sun on his body, seeing the orange light through his closed lids. He thought of the *Liga*, of which he was the local leader, made up of young Republicans, Communists, Socialists, Syndicalists, spreading rapidly throughout the country. "It will be *you* who will be the shock troops to stop the reactionaries, if they rise against us," the Catalan who chose Jose to organize here had told him. "And if they do dare rise, they'll have no mercy on you!" Jose nodded slightly. The semi-secret meetings of the League, the news of their speeches and conversation that had leaked out, the literature that had been slipped under doorways, left on café tables, and even, one dark Saturday night, scattered along the pews of the old church: "SPANIARDS! UNITE TO DEFEND YOUR NEW-FOUND RIGHTS! IF OUR ENEMY RISES WITH FORCE, BE READY TO SUBDUE HIM WITH FORCE!" All this had done nothing to make him popular with the elders in the village . . . *except possibly Father Pedro.*

His eyes still closed, he smiled at the memory of the old priest. Jose had passed the parish house, only a week before, when Father Pedro and his curate were coming down the path together, and on a sudden impulse, he handed a leaflet to each priest, watching them with amusement. One glance at his leaflet and Father Mario, reddening, crushed it and hurled it at Jose, shouting what approached a malediction.

But Father Pedro read his paper gravely. Then he folded it, dropped it in the pocket of his cassock, and looked up at Jose.

"You love Spain, my son?" he asked, gently.

Jose immediately sobered.

"I do, Father."

The tall priest slipped his hand around the young man's shoulder.

Together, slowly, they walked down the highway under a warm morning's sun.

"These are cruel times, puzzling times," commenced the old man. "But I trust my God to lead us aright, and I trust my people. I believe God made this beautiful world for His children — all His children, and I believe His children are only following Him when they take His gift, gently, without malice, but determinedly." He paused. "I remember you, Jose, not so long ago, a bright and earnest boy, faithful to his God . . . You do not go to Mass now, my son . . ."

"No, Father." The reply was low. The priest halted at the church door.

"I do not ask why, son," he said, gravely. "I think I understand. Some day, I believe, you will come back. Meanwhile," he went on, "I will do my duty to God, and you will do your duty to Spain." A smile appeared on his emaciated face. "And perhaps, my son, you would be astonished to know how closely our paths will parallel."

Yes, thought Jose, as he lay motionless, Father Pedro was one elder on his side. And what single force was greater than this man, beloved and heeded above all others in the countryside between Bilbao and San Sebastian? Eyes shut, he nodded again thoughtfully.

And now, far away, he heard the faint beat of a drum, the wail of pipes. The dance of the *arrescu* had begun.

Rafael would be leading the dance now, he thought. And Dolores would be watching intently his graceful steps, his high leaps.

"He ought to get his head knocked in," he thought again, "even if he is my friend." Although a fellow's girl never thanks you for interfering between them. "And Dolores *is* his girl," he murmured.

He listened to the faraway throb of the drum, the plaintive tune of the pipes. He thought of Rafael and Dolores at the latter part of the dance, circling the square together, in each other's arms.

Then he pictured it as if she was *his* girl, instead of Rafael's. He would come to her in the dance holding out his hand, and her eyes were bright as she waited for him. She walked toward him.

"Hello, Jose," she said.

Eyes still closed, Jose smiled. It was almost as if he could hear her small voice, he thought; his heart, for some reason, was pounding.

"Hello, Jose."

He sat up like a shot; whirled around.

Dolores stood beside him, a smile flickering timidly on her lips.

"May I sit down beside you?" she asked, diffidently.

4. THE old man hobbled through the small, dirt-packed square, whipping the people back with a tiny switch. Two other old men were already coming down the cobbled road, one with a drum that hung by his side, the other with pipes. They took their places at one corner of the square; the piper raised the mouth of his pipes to his lips, the drummer started slowly beating his drum. It was a minor, plaintive melody, older than history.

Rafael stepped from the crowd on the side lines. Out of time with the music, seemingly unaware of it, he sauntered around the square's edge. The low melody continued.

Rafael touched another young man, who stepped from the crowd and followed him, equally indifferent to the music. Another boy was touched — another — as they walked around, until twelve or fifteen were in line. And then as many girls were touched to join them.

And now, for no apparent reason, one of the boys stepped to the middle of the square. The music quickened slightly, and he commenced to dance.

Hands on hips, he performed small intricate steps that became wider, faster, until his feet kicked high; and then, with double heel-kick in air, he sank to one knee in salute, rose, and sauntered back into line. Another followed him, with increased tempo in the music, then a third, and a fourth, each seemingly chosen by inspiration.

The speed of the music quickened still more, and Rafael stepped into the center to dance. His feet moved with incredible speed and grace. He jumped far into the air with continuous heel-clicks, spun around, kicked high above his head — his body the flow of the music itself. And finishing, without bothering to salute, he sauntered back to the head of the line.

And now the music changed to a haunting dance melody; and the pairs of boys and girls were revolving in the square in slow waltz rhythm. Although apparently unconscious of others than their partners, when the music changed once more, they suddenly had become a pattern: boy and girl and boy and girl in a line, forming thus six spokes of a wheel that revolved about the center of the square, boys kicking high, while the girls' feet moved in tiny quick steps.

The music quickened again; the wheel revolved faster. The drum loudened, the wail of the pipes rose. Faster and faster the wheel turned.

The drum became a thunderous roll, drowning out the pipes, a call to war. Rafael grasped the hand nearest him, the girl took the hand behind her. Under the ominous roll of the drums, the dancers ran out of the square, down the narrow winding lane between the tenements.

Here, by the village pump in a smaller square, they stopped and the girl behind Rafael laughed, gasping for air.

"You run — as if you — really were going — to battle, Rafael," she said.

Rafael didn't bother to answer. He dropped her hand and turned, scowling, to look back up the hill. Why hadn't Dolores been in front when he was tapping a partner?

He'd like to go back and tell her something! But his uncle's orders had been to come immediately, and that was before the dance began. Without speaking to the others, he started up the steep lane that led, at the side of the fountain square, between the tenements, up to the highway near the parish house.

His uncle looked at him, unsmiling, when he was led into the study.

"You are prompt in obeying my orders, Rafael," he said, shortly. Then, without waiting for an answer, "This is Captain —" he hesitated.

The stranger laughed.

"Call me Captain Quixote," he suggested.

The priest did not smile. His lean face was turned always toward his nephew; his deep-sunk eyes watched him closely.

"You have been to Mass of course today, Rafael?" he asked.

Rafael hung his head.

"Today was a fiesta, Father," he murmured.

"Fiesta? Do you know what fiesta means?" His uncle's thin voice rose. "This is the feast day of the holy Mary Magdalene, the —"

The stranger raised his hand.

"Rafael is young," he admonished gently, "but I'm sure his heart is right." He turned to Rafael. "You love Holy Church, do you not, my boy?" he asked, piously.

"Of course I do, *capitán*," Rafael answered, hastily. "I'd do anything for Her —" his volatile spirits rose, "anything, I'd die for Her, why — why, I'd have gone to Mass today, even, if I hadn't had to play in the games!"

The stranger nodded, satisfied.

"Die for Her — and for the games," he murmured. "Now," he said softly, "sit down, my friend. I'd like to talk to you."

Gently, deftly, he questioned him, and found his answers satisfactory. Rafael was all for war; he was vague as to what it should be about, but so long as they assured him Holy Church was in danger, he'd fight for that and for anything else they might suggest. It might make up for Masses past and future skipped, besides being a lot more fun. In a dark corner, the man with the harelip listened intently, smiling slightly.

"Good." The questioning over, the stranger leaned back in his chair. "And now, one thing more. You have a friend —" he glanced at a slip of paper before him, "Jose Aldez?"

"Next to the best pelota player in the village," Rafael declared simply.

"Unfortunate. Because," the stranger toyed with his pencil, "I understand he is the head of some so-called *Liga de la Juventud.*"

Rafael laughed, with a wave of his hand.

"That's nothing," he assured the other, "he gets funny ideas and forgets them. Some fellow came to town and got talking to him, I suppose. But he's my best friend!"

"Best friends sometimes differ in views," the stranger suggested softly.

"Not Jose and me," said Rafael. "We always agree. I tell him what I think, and he agrees with me!"

The stranger was silent a moment. He looked at the priest.

"Perhaps, then," he said slowly, "we had better look elsewhere for our . . ." He did not finish his sentence. He bade Rafael a warm good-bye, telling him he would hear from him almost immediately, and to keep quiet like a real soldier in the meantime. Rafael, flushed with pride, was starting for the door, and the stranger was about to draw a line through Jose's name, when a discreet cough from the man with the harelip stopped them both.

"May I speak, *capitán?*" the man asked.

The stranger nodded impatiently. The man turned to Rafael, whose hand was on the knob.

"This friend of yours, this Aldez," he said to Rafael. "He was your partner in pelota today?"

"He was," Rafael replied, "and the best partner —"

"Yes, yes." The other waved his hand. "He has, I believe, a dear friend, one — Dolores?" Rafael started.

"Why—why, naturally, they are — sort of friends," he said, at last.

"I thought so," murmured the man; "otherwise, she would not be giving him part of a locket, yes?"

"May I ask —" commenced the stranger, but he stopped at a look from the other. Rafael was staring in astonishment. Then he laughed.

"You're mistaken, *amigo*," he said. "She gave the locket to me. Do we look alike?" He pulled the broken locket from his pocket and held it up. "See?" he exclaimed. "Now tell me how you know —"

"I see *part* of a locket," the man gently interrupted him. "But perhaps it was just by chance she dropped the other part at his feet — and that he held it lovingly before slipping it in his pocket."

Rafael looked at him, his face hard.

"It was just chance," he said evenly. "Jose is loyal to me; my most trusted friend." He looked down at his feet, breathing heavily. Then he threw back his head. "Just chance," he declared again, loudly. He pulled open the door and hurried out.

It was nearly dark when he got outside. He walked quickly down the path, slowing uncertainly as he neared the highway. He heard a voice softly call him, and turning, he saw the man with the harelip.

"You are perhaps hunting for the señorita?"

"I am going for a walk," Rafael replied shortly.

"Because I was going to say I saw the young lady as I came in the parish house strolling that way." He pointed toward the bend. "The same direction," he added, "your friend went, some time ago."

Rafael watched him a moment. Neither noticed the old priest, Father Pedro, who had just come out of the church and was walking wearily, head bowed, past them toward the parish house. Finally, as the man continued to gaze back at him, Rafael lowered his eyes.

"Perhaps I'll stroll in that direction myself," he murmured.

The man watched him. He saw Rafael's walk change to a stride, and then to a run as he reached the bend and passed from sight; then the man turned back to the parish house.

In the darkening study, the stranger still held his pencil poised over Jose's name. At last he laid the pencil down. He looked across at the priest.

"One who cannot trust his friend in love cannot trust him in politics," he said with a smile. "I think Señor Aldez' name remains at the head of our list."

5. JOSE stared in wonder at the girl beside him, and his heart beat fast. The sun had already disappeared into the mountains behind the village, and in the cold light from the open sea her face and throat gleamed like marble. She looked at him quickly, then turned her head away, the embarrassed smile again quivering at the corner of her lips.

"Is it very wrong of me to come up here, Jose?" she asked softly, plucking at the grass with nervous fingers.

Jose opened his mouth to speak, then swallowed.

"No," he finally managed to say, "I — you — we —" He ended in a fit of coughing.

"I was tired of the games and all the noise," she went on in a low voice, jerking at a clump of grass, "so I thought I'd take a walk by myself, although I know a girl shouldn't . . ." Her voice trailed away.

"You didn't —" he coughed again, "I suppose you didn't —" he cleared his throat. "Of course you didn't expect to find me here." His voice was suddenly a low growl.

"I hoped maybe you . . ." Jose's heart jumped. She swung around to him. "Jose, I was talking yesterday to Luis — you know, Luis Danillo?"

Jose nodded, unable yet to think coherently.

"He was telling me about something, and I wanted to see you alone. I wanted to talk to you about the *Liga de la Juventud* . . ." Her little smile had disappeared, and she looked at him uncertainly.

"Oh . . ." For the first time Jose wasn't enthusiastic about the *Liga*. "It was — *that* was why you wanted to see me, was it?"

"Yes, that was it." Her voice was soft, measured. She turned to look out to sea. "I've got an uncle who lives in Bilbao. He's a Syndicalist, I think; I don't know much about different parties, even now. But he always talked to me when I went up there; and then he'd give me books to read. Just romances at first." He glanced down again at her fingers that played in the grass. "But they told you about French peasants having their little plot of ground, all to themselves, and how in North America some of the workers even own automobiles. And then I read how in Russia the workers and peasants own everything." She looked up at him. "Everything, Jose!" she said.

Jose nodded, forgetting his disappointment.

"I know."

She took a deep breath, gazing out to sea again.

"Well, here the church and the great landlords own everything. They own the sea," she swept her hand over the ocean, "or, anyhow, all the boats, big and small, on it." She paused a moment. "I knew it wasn't right!" she said, at last, vehemently, "it isn't right for Spaniards to work all day long just for enough, to work the next day, never owning a tiny piece of land, never owning anything, it isn't right! I thought of that all day long when I was working in the canning factory. And at last," she said, soberly, gazing across the water, "at last I talked with my uncle, and he gave me some other books — not romances — to read." She looked down at her fingers twisting the grass.

"It was hard for me to understand at first," she said slowly, "and I never talked with anyone, I thought they'd laugh at me. I just thought I'd try to learn; because perhaps maybe some day — And then, Jose —" her head jerked up, her eyes were wide with foreboding, "then, yesterday, Luis told me something. Luis said —" her voice was a whisper, now, "that there are whisperings all over the country that those —"

Jose clutched her hand.

"It isn't true!" he said roughly. "It can't be true! They *can't* do it!"

"But if it *is* true, Jose, you people who are starting this work will be the first they'll attack. You will have to fight them!"

He nodded slowly.

"And I want to join you, Jose! I want to fight, if we have to!" While Jose stared at the delicate girl, with opened mouth, she went on hurriedly, "Other women have done it, in Russia and France and places! Do you think I want to just sit back and be Rafael's wife — his woman?" Her thin lip curled for an instant. "I used to think I loved Rafael, but now, every day he treats me more and more as if he owned me, and I'm not going to be owned!" Her voice rose. "I'm not going to be owned by any man or priest or landlord!"

Jose watched her in amazement. These were so much like the thoughts he had been thinking; and he had believed that in all Morino he had been thinking them alone, save as he was able to pass them on to his League. Once, two years before, a student from the University of Madrid had spent the summer here. He took a liking to Jose, and the evenings were passed in long walks and talks; and Jose

sat in the student's little room in the inn, sometimes until dawn, listening to thick books read by candlelight, and the simple expounding of them.

And after the student went away, he wrote regularly, and sent Jose more books and pamphlets, with long letters of explanation. And then, once, after receiving one of Jose's equally long comments, he wrote: "You're not aggressive; you're not sure of yourself. But some day, knowing your courage and your intelligence, if the time ever comes when it is necessary, I will put you down as a leader of men."

Jose had smiled at that — even though, by that time, he was finding the explanatory letters sent with the literature unnecessary . . . But now, to find Dolores following the same track! How many others in the village, he suddenly wondered, had been quietly learning, preparing? It was nearly dark now, but he could see the gleam in Dolores' eyes. And he felt a strange thrill, a love and pride for her and for Spain, which seemed somehow one and the same. Now, nebulous thoughts, romantic stirrings, began to harden into resolution. If these incredible rumors, these dark whisperings, were true, then he and his would fight until the last one dropped . . . but the last one would not drop, he thought; and again a strange thrill shot through him.

For a long time they talked in low voices. Dusk deepened to night, and the brittle stars slowly appeared and brightened on the black curtain sweeping from the mountains overhead to the faraway horizon. He still held her hand in his, and she did not remove it, but listened to his plans and those of his comrades. Suddenly, however, he stopped abruptly.

He sat up stiffly, held his breath, listening.

"Then you will let me join you?" Dolores asked, low.

Jose did not answer. He could hear nothing save the muffled boom of the surf far beneath them. Slowly he twisted around.

"I could live like a man." Dolores' low voice was clear in the stillness.

Jose raised his hand to stop her.

"*Shh*, Dolores. Be quiet," he whispered. He was straining his eyes, peering at the wall of rock that rose across the highway. *Had* he heard something? Why was his back suddenly tingling?

Dolores did not hear his whisper.

"I could stand hardships —" she commenced.

His hand clutched her arm.

"Dolores. Don't," he breathed.

"But why? I — I think I'd be brave, and —"

But now she felt his lips pressed against her ear.

"Be still, Dolores." She could just make out the words. "*There's someone standing across the road!*"

Jose felt her arm tighten under his hand. He raised himself slowly to his feet. He stood a moment, peering forward. At last he could make out a figure, tall and motionless, in the dim light from the open sea.

"Who is it?" he said in a low voice.

The figure did not answer, did not move. Jose took a step forward.

"What do you want?" he asked louder.

Still no answer. But now for a moment Jose saw something gleam wickedly by the man's right side, and as quickly he knew the answer.

His own hand shot to his back pocket, where he jerked out his hunting knife and snapped the button, releasing the blade. There would be no explaining, he knew; and there could be but one answer to a fight with Rafael. Suddenly the realization of what had come into his life this last hour — Dolores as a friend, an exultant determination to fight for Spain — flooded him; and he choked back a sob at the thought it must all be wasted on this. But he walked toward the road, facing the inevitable.

Now the figure came to life, took a step forward, catlike, as Jose reached the road.

"Rafael?" Jose whispered.

There was no answer. But the figure advanced. Jose attempted the useless.

"Rafael," he pleaded, "don't be a fool! Dolores and I were just —"

It was like the spring of a mountain lion. Jose jumped aside just in time. He felt the sleeve of his shirt rip. He whirled around and backed a few steps; crouched, facing the sea and Rafael. Beyond Rafael he was dimly aware of Dolores, standing petrified on the promontory.

Rafael studied him. Then he came slowly forward. Jose waited, heart pounding. *Por el amor de Dios*, why had he not learned to use a knife?

The dark figure halted, two yards away from him. Jose could see

the eyes, like a cat's, as he held his own knife upraised. Just one moment thus; and in a split second Rafael had Jose's right wrist clutched in his iron hand, his knife shot back like a gleam of light — and as suddenly he was gone from sight!

Jose stood in a daze. He was dimly aware of an approaching sound, then of a blaze of headlights as a car swung around a corner and drew up beside him with screeching brakes.

It was an open car, covered, with all flaps drawn. Jose still held the knife in his hand as the front door flew open. He automatically shut the knife and slipped it into his pocket, while a man thrust his body out the door.

"Get in back, you!" he commanded.

"What's that for?" asked Jose, still bewildered.

For answer, a gun snapped out and was pushed almost into Jose's face.

"Climb in, quick!" the other snarled.

The rear door opened.

"Come on!" a voice called from the darkness inside. "Get in!"

Jose climbed in. His foot was scarcely on the running board when the car started forward with a leap. He half tumbled onto the floor and pulled himself up to the seat.

"Close the door!" snapped the voice beside him.

Jose did not move.

"Close the door, damn you!"

Weakly, Jose reached over and pulled shut the door of the swiftly moving car. But all the time his eyes strained, vainly, to see the floor at his feet. For something soft and yielding touched his own feet there — the skirt of the person whose skinny hand he had felt when he tumbled into the car.

6. OLD Father Pedro left the church and moved slowly down the walk, his head sunk in thought. He was thinking wistfully of the life he had so longed for, and which now he feared he would never know.

"Thy will be done," he murmured, unconsciously crossing himself.

But it was hard — it might be wicked — but it was hard to resign himself without a regret. He pictured the monastery he had hoped in just two months to retire to for the rest of his earthly existence: the quiet walks, two by two, in the patio, while the sun gleamed on the luxuriant palms in the court and the bells clanged in the clear blue sky overhead, the matins in the dark chapel, the hours of prayer and contemplation in the cool of his cell. "Surely, surely, God, I have earned this," he suddenly protested, as he turned into the highway leading toward the parish house.

But it was not to be; not now. These people, *his* people, with whom he had bled when they bled, and rejoiced when they rejoiced for half a century, needed him now more than ever before! Long had he stood between them and his more earthly brothers in the cloth, the rapacious landlords, and factory owners, "and, dear God," he whispered, "is it the sin of pride that makes me believe I was useful in the smallest of ways?" He turned into the parish house path and passed two figures without noticing them, so wrapped was he in his thoughts.

If he was unsure of his usefulness, he was not so stupid as to be unaware of his great power over the people for miles around; and now, more than ever he felt, his services might be needed to guide them. Before today there had been mysterious visitors to the parish house, whisperings, dark hints from Father Mario. But today it was more than a hint.

"Is Armageddon come at last, O Lord?" he whispered, "or must we simply be tried once again with fire and sword?" Slowly, he climbed the steps, opened the door, and started along the darkened corridor. Before the study door, he halted and soundlessly made a vow.

"Whether it be Armageddon, O Lord, or whether Thou art trying us once again, I shall fight on the side I believe Thou hast taught me is right, the side of Thy people, Thou giving me strength!" He laid his hand on the knob of the door to open it, and then stopped.

He stood rigid a moment. Then, after hesitating, he bent, with creaking bones, to the keyhole.

And as he listened, his forehead grew wet with perspiration. The blood leaped to his face, and then receded, leaving him faint. It could not be true, he had not heard right! A brother priest —

A hand clamped on his shoulder.

"A new position for prayer, Father?" asked a gruff voice.

With difficulty, the old priest raised himself. For a moment he felt only shame at having been caught eavesdropping. The man with the harelip gripped his arm.

"You'll be more comfortable saying your beads inside, Father," he told him, "and I'm betting the captain will be interested in this new fashion of doing it!" He opened the door and shoved Father Pedro in the study. "I caught His Worship in holy contemplation at the keyhole, *capitán*," he announced as he entered, "and thought maybe you'd like to join him in prayer."

Father Mario and the stranger jumped up, startled. Father Pedro stood erect, gazing at them with blazing eyes. There was a moment's silence.

"You have heard — anything of interest, Father?" the stranger asked softly, at last.

"Of interest? I have heard the most damnable —" the old man choked.

"Damnable? That's a strong word, Father. What, for instance, did you hear so — so shocking?"

"May the Holy Mother keep me from repeating those fiendish — But, no!" His lips drew back in a mirthless smile. "Rather, may She protect me while I go out and repeat what I have heard to the whole village, the whole countryside!"

The stranger looked down, thoughtfully. Then he raised his eyes to the man with the harelip who stood just behind the white-haired priest. He did not flicker an eye; just gazed at the man intently. Then:

"May the Holy Mother keep you," he repeated gravely.

Father Pedro saw his grave face; saw behind the stranger Father Mario's eyes and mouth open wide with horror; saw his brother priest's hand jerk forward, heard the beginning of his cry. Only the others, however, heard the crack of the gun's butt on Father Pedro's skull, and saw him sink in a heap to the floor.

The stranger took command.

"You!" he snapped to his aide; "get the car that's down the road! Easy! No fuss!" And as the man slipped out, he swung around to Father Mario who stood moaning, with ashen face, wringing his hands and staring helplessly at his vicar. "Sit down!" barked the stranger, "*sit down!*" He thrust him back in his seat.

"Listen!" he commanded. "He won't be killed! Do you hear? He won't be killed! We're not killing priests if we can help it. But a priest as powerful as you say he is — we're just putting him out of harm's way until he can be brought to trial before the Bishop — after the fighting's all over." He bent over the horror-stricken Father Mario threateningly. "And you're in it with the rest of us!" he told him. "Do you hear?" He was still arguing, threatening, when the man with the harelip reappeared, followed by the two other original occupants of the car. The stranger ran to look up and down the corridor.

"All right! Take him up!" he commanded.

He preceded the men to the outer door, went ahead to make sure the highway was empty. He watched them dump the limp priest, his cassock wrapped around his thin legs, in the rear of the car. The aide climbed in back, the two others in front.

"Drive to the Marquesa de Valera's," the stranger ordered. "I'll join you as soon as I get this fool back here quieted."

"That makes two down today for a good cause," said the man with the harelip, grinning, as he started to close the door.

"Two?"

"I sent that young hothead out after his old friend," he explained. "The last I saw was him running down the road here —" he jerked his thumb over his shoulder, "— after blood."

The stranger swore.

"*Hijo de puta!*" he snarled. "And have the village down on us from the start? Turn around and drive like hell, and stop him if you can! *Anda!*"

The car shot forward, and the man with the harelip tumbled backward as he attempted to salute. He slammed the door shut, muttering to himself.

"Yell out if you see a tall young fellow along the road," he growled, as the car backed and turned. He sat peering forward as they tore along until, rounding a bend, the driver called back:

"A fellow with a knife!" And, on orders from behind, he drew up with screeching brakes.

The man in back heard the driver's threat, and throwing open his door, he vaguely saw a young man standing in the darkness. After ordering him inside, he sat for a few moments without speaking. At last he growled:

"You're a pretty lad, running around the highway, waving a knife!"

Jose turned and stared into the darkness. Was he being arrested? But if so, what, in God's name, was *this* at his feet? He was only dimly aware the car was jerkily turning back on the highway. At last he forced himself to speak.

"He started it first," he said. His voice was low and quivering.

"Oh, he did, did he?" The voice in the darkness laughed. It was more like a snarl. "I suppose you went running down the highway a couple of kilometers just so he could start it first!"

Jose stared into the darkness.

"Me?" he exclaimed. "I was just sitting there with a — with a friend, when —"

"Cut it!" snapped the other. "Maybe you don't recognize my voice, but I'm the fellow that told you where your girl went. I didn't think you was fool enough to start carving them up. We got trouble enough with this here!"

Jose felt the body at his feet quiver as his companion kicked it. He understood now. This gang, whatever it was, thought he was Rafael! He sat tense, alert. He forgot the limp body, stopped wondering, even, where he was going; he concentrated on one thing: to keep the man beside him from learning the truth. He now knew too much, he realized, for his own good.

He cleared his throat, trying to control his voice.

"I didn't recognize you at first," he finally was able to say. "You sound different in this jouncing car."

The other was silent a minute.

"You don't sound the same, either," he muttered. "Your voice sounds a hell of a lot different."

Jose's heart jumped.

"It's because I'm sore, maybe." He forced the words out, holding his feet back to keep from touching that *thing*. "I — I want to get that fellow."

"You didn't find him?"

"Sure, I found him. I near had him. Then your car came along, and he slipped me."

"A damned good thing," growled the other. "The boss gave me hell for putting you on his track. Where'd you find him?" he asked.

"Just where you said I would," Jose replied, a little more easy now. Then, suddenly, he heard the other swing around to him.

"Where I said you would?" the man snapped. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, didn't you tell me — I mean —" Jose floundered, "didn't you say . . ." He stopped and took a long, quiet breath.

The man waited a moment.

"Well, didn't I say *what?*" he asked slowly.

Jose felt sweat on his forehead. He couldn't see beyond the flaps, but he knew the car had long since passed the village and was hurtling along at seventy kilometers or more an hour. He took another deep breath.

"Didn't you say I'd find him down the road there?" he finally asked.

There was another pause, while Jose waited, the nails of his clenched fists digging into his palms.

"Sure," the voice replied at last. "I told you you'd find him down the road there." Jose checked a sigh of relief. Silence. Then: "How would you like your uncle's job?" the man asked.

What job? Then Jose remembered he was supposed to be Rafael.

"All right," he replied carelessly, "if you like being a priest."

"Been at it long?"

"About ten years."

"People like him here?"

"I guess so. They like Father Pedro better." If he kept on this subject, Jose thought, he could go on all night. He wondered if Rafael was supposed to know about the body at his feet, but he didn't dare chance questioning.

"Think your uncle will recover from that stroke this afternoon?" the voice continued.

Jose started slightly.

"I think he will," he said, after a moment's pause. "He's had one before."

There was an ominous silence. Then Jose heard a scratch. A small

light flared up, and the match was stuck in his face. It was extinguished before Jose could look at his companion.

"I thought so." The voice was like steel. "The other one!"

Jose didn't bother to answer. His hand went to his hip pocket. But before he could pull out his knife, something hard was shoved into his side.

"Belda!" the man barked. "Tell me when we get to an open stretch — no people around!"

"Pretty open here!" Belda called back. "Wait! a couple of houses! What's wrong?"

The man didn't answer, just pressed hard against Jose's ribs, waiting.

For an instant Jose sat motionless, thinking rapidly. Even if he could get out his knife without the other's knowing it, he knew he could never swing around to thrust before the trigger was pulled. There was one long, desperate chance.

Quickly, but easily, he thrust his hand in his back pocket. The jolt of the car made his slight movement unnoticed.

"How is it, Belda?"

"Just passed them. All right, maybe. Depends on what you want to do."

Jose had drawn out the knife, snapped the blade open. But while he did it, he listened intently to the voice of the invisible driver directly ahead of him. With a prayer to nothing in particular, he jerked back his arm from the elbow and let fly the knife with all his force in the direction of the voice.

It all happened simultaneously. A sharp scream from the driver — a twist, a crash of the car that sent them all shooting forward — the crack of the gun. Jose felt for the door while still sprawling over the limp body, found the handle, threw the door open, and dove outside. Picking himself up, he tore around the back of the car, away from the precipitous mountainside, and ran across the road. He heard the man with the gun jump out of the car, roaring to the others; and sensing the edge of the road, he jumped into space.

7. RAFAEL scrambled out of the ditch and stood looking after the car as it turned and shot up the road toward the village. He watched it until it swung around a distant bend. Then, slowly, he turned his head.

He saw the girl standing motionless on the promontory, black against the lesser darkness. It seemed hours ago she had been standing in that same position. He walked across the road.

Dolores did not move. He stopped in front of her.

"*Maldita puta!*" he said through his teeth.

She did not answer. He knew she was looking at him, but she did not seem to see him.

"How many do you take a night?" he growled. "What do they pay you?"

He waited. After a long time, she spoke.

"Go on and kill me." Her voice was unnatural.

Rafael stepped closer to her.

"I don't kill my women," he said in a low voice. "I —" He drew back his arm and shot out his fist. The crack echoed against the cliff behind him. Without waiting to see her slump, he turned and strode back up the road.

He was sure the voice he had heard belonged to the man with the harelip. What in hell was he picking up Aldez for? He hurried on to the parish house through the darkness, to find out. He reached it just as a man jumped into a waiting car and started the motor.

Rafael recognized the new parish Ford. He walked up to it and the driver stuck his head out.

"Aznar?" It was the stranger's voice. "Jump in! And be quick."

Rafael climbed in, and the car started off with a bound.

"What's the matter, *capitán?* What's going on?"

The stranger swung around to him.

"Did you have any trouble?" he demanded. "Did you get in a mess with that Aldez fellow?"

They were passing above the village, but suddenly Rafael saw a girl lying motionless on a dark, lonely promontory. He grasped the other's arm.

"Stop!" he gasped. "Stop!"

"What? What the hell's the matter with you?"

Rafael's arm dropped to his side. *Dolores!* he thought, *oh, Dolores! Holy Mother, what have I done!*

"What in hell's wrong with you?" the stranger asked again.

"I thought — I saw him," Rafael muttered.

"Cut that, my boy! And cut it now! That's why I wanted to talk to you. We're going to need you for bigger things! Aldez will be taken care of, all right."

Rafael slouched in his seat. For some time they were both silent. Beyond the village, on the Bilbao side, the slope to the sea was less precipitous, while thick trees and underbrush hid the water altogether. Finally Rafael spoke, in a lifeless voice.

"What did your friends kidnap Aldez for?" he asked.

He felt the car jerk as the stranger wheeled around to him.

"*Kidnaped Aldez?*" He cursed under his breath. "Of all the weak-witted imbeciles! How did you happen to know?" he demanded, and then, before Rafael could reply: "And I suppose the fools took him to the Marquesa de Valera's, too!" he snarled.

Rafael sat up.

"Are *we* going to the Marquesa de Valera's?" he asked.

"We are," the other snapped. "You're going to learn about life."

Rafael whistled softly. The Marquesa de Valera, the young widow of the great landlord of the countryside, the woman whose estates Jose's friends were already trying to break up! As a boy, Rafael and his playmates had often sneaked through the spacious gardens and around the large eighteenth century villa. It was the ancient chateau, however, that rose directly behind the villa, that had excited his imagination most, roofless, crumbling, but with thick, impenetrable walls. The Marquesa herself Rafael had seen on one of the few occasions when she bothered to visit Spain, a blond woman (she was half English), fair-skinned, exquisitely beautiful. After he had seen her, Rafael had forgotten Dolores for three whole days, and in his dreams, he wooed and won the great lady, along with her lands. Now he sat back, closing his eyes; and the dreams returned.

They drove for another half hour, then slowed down. Rafael opened his eyes as they passed through the large gates. The smell of magnolias and heavy-scented night flowers filled the air as they drove through the park; and at last they rolled up before the door of the villa, darkened, save for the lights from one large room at the end. They climbed out, and the stranger pulled the bell.

The door was opened almost immediately by a tall, pale-faced

servant. In a great, dim-lit hall behind, which finally was lost in shadows, Rafael could make out the face of a woman a few yards away.

"Who is it, Carlos?" she called. Rafael was struck both by the clearness of her voice, and the note of anxiety in it.

The stranger stepped forward.

"It's me, Marquesa," he answered. He slipped by the servant and advanced, speaking rapidly in some foreign language. The servant stepped aside, and Rafael diffidently followed.

As he stopped and waited, he could see the Marquesa's large hazel eyes glistening in the light of the small electric torch on the wall, the two tiny spots of red on her pale white cheeks. She answered the stranger, also in a foreign language, and with equal rapidity, but, it seemed to Rafael — as much as he dared look — that her eyes moved beyond the stranger to himself. Finally she nodded her head.

"*Bien*," she said. "Carlos!" she commanded, "take this gentleman to his friends. Carlos," she added, in a lowered voice, "is trustworthy." She turned to Rafael. "And now, Señor —?"

"Aznar, Marquesa," Rafael answered, low.

She smiled at him.

"Will Señor Aznar allow me to try to entertain him a few minutes?"

As he followed the Marquesa across the great bare hall, Rafael saw Carlos open a narrow iron door in the right wall. Lighting a candle, the servant held it high and waited for the stranger to precede him. Rafael saw them descend a narrow staircase as the door gently swung to.

The Marquesa led him to the lighted room at the end, a large room with a great electric chandelier of gleaming crystal in the center, with chairs and tables of gilt and pale gold coverings, and immense dark paintings on the walls. She seated herself on a divan, and motioned him beside her. Rafael gingerly sat down.

"And so," the young lady commenced, "you're the great pelota player?"

"Yes, Señora Marquesa," he answered, very low.

She laughed at that. Rafael didn't know why she did, but he liked her laugh. It reminded him of a bell.

"But you *are* a great player!" she added quickly. "I saw you from a distance, but I will never forget your playing. You were like —

some fine animal," her voice became dreamy, and she glanced at him from the corner of her eyes, "like an ancient Greek hero."

Rafael flushed with pleasure. He did not see the twitch of her lips, but his eyes did rise to her breasts, tightly encased in a low cut gown of pale silk. She followed his eyes, and although *she* did not flush, she felt a certain satisfaction.

"I'm glad you liked my playing, Señora Marquesa," he said.

"I doubt if I was the only female who enjoyed it, though," she went on. "Perhaps there were half a dozen — or perhaps there was just one? Tell me, Señor," she said with mock earnestness, "is there a *just one?*"

Rafael shuddered, seeing Dolores lying outstretched on the promontory. He turned his eyes away. *Dolores*, he thought, *my Dolores! will you ever forgive me?*

The marquesa, watching him, smiled again.

"I'm sorry," she said soothingly, "if I've brought up unhappy thoughts." Her finger gently brushed his.

The touch was like electricity. He looked up, smiling.

"It isn't anything, Señora Marquesa," he assured her.

"But I'm certain there is something! I'm sure there are a dozen beautiful girls pining for you right now!" She laughed. "Let's see!" She took his hand in hers. "I'm a very fine fortuneteller," she said. "I learned it from an old gypsy. Now this," she said slowly, "is your life line — but we don't care about that. These — *look at all those!* Those are the women you are going to love!"

Rafael glanced listlessly at his open palm in her hand. He let it sink, leadenly, until his wrist rested upon her knee. Immediately she was on her feet.

"Señor forgets he is not in his Morino tenements!" she said sharply.

Scarcely listening to his confused apologies, she walked to the window and stood looking out, biting her lip. Why must she always be drawn, as by a magnet, to every good looking man, even a peasant?

Motionless, she gazed before her. Then slowly, the irritation faded; in the blankness of the window, she pictured Rafael's handsome face; his hard thighs; she felt again the touch of his wrist on her knee. "Why don't the others come up?" she thought impatiently.

For some minutes she stood there, looking out. Then she turned back, a polite smile on her lips.

"Tell me something about pelota, Señor," she said, as she sat beside him. "I know so little about it!"

The old priest was conscious now. He sat upright on the stool in his little cell, staring before him. The man with the harelip and his two companions, one of whom held a candle, watched him, wondering what to do next.

The leader was becoming continually more uneasy. Not that he himself minded; it was his companions he was thinking about. They were trustworthy enough — but — after all, a priest, to them, was a priest. He heard the muffled sound of feet descending the narrow winding stairway, and he breathed a sigh of relief. In a minute the light from another candle brightened the stone wall across the corridor, darkened by two hundred years of dampness, and the stranger appeared.

"Thank God you've come!" exclaimed the man with the harelip. "What will we do now?"

The stranger looked at the priest.

"Father," he said softly, "I regret from the bottom of my heart the villainous act of one of my men, and I'll see to it he is severely punished!"

His aide started, but the stranger glanced quickly at him. Father Pedro did not move his eyes nor speak.

"It was done in the heat of the moment, which however does not excuse it," the stranger purred on. "But you see, we are working so constantly, so tensely, for Mother Church, ready, glad even to give our lives for Her, that we are sometimes a little — well, shall we say, impetuous. You understand, don't you, Father?"

If the priest heard him, he gave no sign of it.

The stranger continued, however, in his seductive, pleasant voice. He spoke of several churches that had been burned already in bitter local struggles in Catalonia, and he swore that the chief aim of the present Republican government was to burn every church in Spain, if possible with the priests inside. He and his fellows, he went on, were determined to protect the church, however — if need be, with their lives. They were crusaders, Defenders of the Faith, and it was the duty of the Church to aid, not to hinder, them.

The priest did not stir; but the stranger went on. He forgot to whom he was talking in his enthusiastic portrayal of the exact manner

in which the Church and the country were to be saved. He gave intimate, vivid pictures of what was going to happen to the Anarchists and the Syndicalists when the day came. He paused some time in Madrid and disposed of the members of the Republican government, one by one, dwelling on each new mode of punishment in dreamy ecstasy. Finally, having bored even himself, he turned to the priest.

"Well, Father?" he asked, gently. "Will you help the cause of God and Holy Church?"

The priest continued to stare before him.

The stranger shrugged.

"Then," he said, sadly, "I regret you must remain in — er, seclusion, to await the decision of the Bishop — who, I'm afraid, will have more important matters on his hands until things are settled right again." He turned to his men. "We will go now," he said.

Father Pedro continued to sit stiffly, eyes before him, until the sound of their feet died away, until the last ray of light disappeared. Even then, for a long time, he did not stir. Finally, his lips moved slightly.

"Father," the words came soundlessly, "Father, forgive me, if I do not forgive them with all my heart and soul." His head throbbed with a needle-like pain. With trembling fingers, he felt in the pocket of his cassock for his beads, and then sank to his knees.

One by one the beads were slowly said in the darkness. Then, suddenly, his fingers stopped. A smile came to his thin lips.

"Why, Father," he whispered, "I have what I prayed for! Thou gavest it to me sooner even than I hoped . . . the peace and quiet of my own cell!"

Meanwhile, the stranger, returning upstairs with his men, was greeted by the servant with halting apologies. The stranger brushed them aside, however.

"I understand, Carlos," he said, "the marquesa and Aznar have undoubtedly gone out to look at the stars. The Marquesa de Valera, I've noticed before, is very fond of looking at the stars."

"Yes, Señor *Capitán*." Carlos bowed. "That is very true, Señor. You will wait, Señor?"

The stranger sank in a flimsy chair in the great drawing room, while his men stood by the door. In a moment another door opened, and the marquesa and Rafael came in.

"Have we been keeping you waiting?" the marquesa asked. "We were out looking at the stars, you know."

"Fine," replied the stranger. "I'm glad to see you still love nature." Then, without waiting to see if she flushed, he turned to Rafael.

"Sit down, Rafael," he invited him.

Rafael sat down on the edge of the divan where the marquesa had seated herself.

"I want to ask you about your friend Aldez," the older man went on. "You still feel he can be trusted?"

Rafael's jaw tightened.

"He's no friend of mine," he said, with close lips. "He's a low, stinking —"

The stranger waved his hand.

"I understand all that," he said. "But I'm asking you, can *we* trust him? We, us, our cause?"

Rafael controlled himself. He leaned forward, his hands folded between his legs.

"You can't, *capitán*," he replied, earnestly. "I heard him tonight talking to — to some friend of his, telling about plans of his gang. They're going to get arms, if they can, and they're going to stand up to the — the patriots, or whatever you call them —"

"Nationalists," corrected the stranger, gently.

"— the Nationalists, if they all die for it. Anyhow, they think so now."

"Get guns," murmured the other slowly. "They're willing to fight us." He gazed at the ceiling thoughtfully, leaning back in his chair. "And you say he's their leader?" he suddenly asked.

"He's the captain of their *Liga de la Juventud*, *capitán*."

Another silence. All at once the stranger whirled on the man with the harelip.

"You!" he snapped. "Why the hell did you pick him up?"

"Why — why, I thought, *capitán*, he was —"

"Yes, yes, I know what you thought." The stranger waved his hand. He waited a moment. "Where is he now?" he barked.

His aide dropped his eyes.

"He escaped, *capitán*," he murmured.

"He escaped." The stranger smiled. It was not a pleasant smile. "He escaped . . . And before he escaped, did he realize you had a — a guest with you?"

The other's voice was scarcely audible,

"He did, *capitán.*"

"Señor Aldez," murmured the stranger, softly, "I fear another cross goes before your name." He jumped up and started pacing the floor. "But we must go warily." He seemed to be talking to himself. The rest watched him with intent interest. "Until the moment arrives, we are dear friends. '*Buenos dias*, Señor Aldez! *Buenos dias*, my dear Anarchist friends!' We must wait." He was almost whispering now, as he paced up and down. "We must wait —"

The telephone rang shrilly through the room, and every one jumped. The marquesa turned impatiently. The phone was beside the stranger, and he swooped on it.

"Hello," he barked.

There was a moment's silence, while the others watched him. As he listened, the man's eyes brightened.

"Well?" said the marquesa at last.

The stranger put down the receiver and turned to her.

"He said," he told her, smiling, "the goods have arrived safely in port."

The Marquesa de Valera stared at him.

"What — did — you — say?" she whispered.

"I said," he repeated slowly, "the goods have arrived safely in port."

For a second time she sat motionless. Then, suddenly, she jumped to her feet.

"Carlos!" she cried, "Carlos! Wine! The best wine! Champagne!" She swung around to the astonished men, flinging her arms in the air. "We will drink to success!" she cried, "we will drink to a great and glorious future! *General Franco has landed in Spain.*"

8. STONES and pebbles rolled down the embankment with Jose, jutting rocks tore at his clothes and skin, and at last he crashed into a small tree and gripped it. Here he waited, motionless, listening to the feet running toward the embankment above.

A moment's silence. Then he heard a scratch on a rock. As the match flared up, he saw three faces peering downward. He closed his eyes tight and waited for the end.

When he opened them, it was dark again, and he suddenly realized he was too far down to be seen by the match light. He heard them walk away, the man who had been beside him cursing loudly. He listened while they worked on the car, which, he gathered, had only struck a dirt bank. After what seemed hours, while he still clutched the tiny tree, he heard the motor start up; then the car moved off. Finally, the sound died away, leaving everything silent. Very gently, he waved his arm around, found another slim tree trunk, and carefully pulled himself up.

It was a hard climb to the road, and when he did reach it, he sank down, tenderly feeling his bruises and trying to think. What had this ride been about? Who were his companions, and who was the woman, dead or alive, in the bottom of the car? Where, finally, were they going? It was all, he knew, in some manner connected with Rafael. And with that, he suddenly jumped up.

Dolores!

Rafael and she had been left alone together! Maybe he had killed her! He staggered and ran along the highway.

"Dolores!" he gasped as he ran, "I'm coming, Dolores!"

A driver of a truck loaded with iron ore for San Sebastian gave him a lift, and seeing his condition and hearing him mutter incoherently, the man was glad to let him off at the head of the village of Morino. Here Jose stood staring dazedly down the cobbled road beside the village hall, at the square below. Should he go to her home, at this hour, or should he run around to the promontory where he had left her?

The square was empty, lit by one lone street lamp. The line of shop fronts was bare and dreary looking in that light, while the tenements opposite rose darkly into the night sky. As he walked, hesitatingly down to the square, a girl's figure appeared from a black alley between the tenements at the other end, and then slipped back again. With a shout, Jose ran across the square.

She put her hand over his mouth when he reached her side in the darkness.

"I had to go home and go to bed," she whispered, "but I couldn't sleep, worrying about what happened to you."

Jose felt a sudden glow. He wanted to take her and hold her so tight as to hurt her. Instead, he thrust his hands in his pockets and told her quickly about his ride. He heard her shocked gasps at the strange story. Then, after a short silence, she told him, in turn, how Rafael knocked her down.

"*Hijo de puta!*" he growled. "*La puta de su madre*, I'll —" But again her hand came over his mouth.

"Don't!" she whispered. "There's lots more important things right now than fighting with Rafael!" She said a few more words, then, suddenly, was gone. Jose had time only to kiss gently the hand over his mouth before he was alone.

Tired, yet elated, he felt his way down the alley to his own tenement, climbed five darkened flights of stairs, found his room, and was asleep when he fell on the bed. Next morning he woke to news that put his and Dolores' adventures in the shade.

General Franco had landed; General Mola was marching to Madrid! The whole village buzzed with it, though in lowered voices, every man cautious with his neighbor. In the square, men stopped in twos and threes, and were immediately joined by others. Yet — that first day, anyhow — almost the only question was: "What is the latest?" Few yet dared ask: "What do you think of it?"

Simultaneously with the landing of Franco were uprisings of the military in Seville, Madrid, Barcelona, Malaga, Valencia, and other large centers. The plan was perfect, everything had been prepared, everything accounted for — except the people. Seville was lost to the military immediately, due to lack of arms; but from then on the city was constantly harried by workers and peasants in the suburbs. In Madrid, the unarmed populace congregated before the great Montaña Barracks, and overwhelmed that center of soldiers and munitions by sheer mass force, thus saving the city.

In Barcelona, the desperate citizens commandeered all taxicabs after the city was theoretically captured and set up machine guns at all strategic points. In columns of six, six deep, the cabs tore down the boulevards, into the crackling nests, shattering them; and one such nest finished, they swung about — their own vanguard, of course, de-

stroyed — and tore along the streets to destroy the next one. And when the Fascist general, Goded, arriving from the Balearics, greeted the shouting throng with bows and smiles, he was taken prisoner and, still in a daze, executed within twenty-four hours.

Fifteen thousand belligerent but unarmed Asturian miners were killed in those first days; peasants, passive as well as active, were killed right and left by General Queipo de Llano, on the ground that the poor, of necessity, were his enemies. But still the peasants, miners, and trade unions rose, and with guns, sticks, rocks, held off the astounded invading army, which had promised to be in Madrid within forty-eight hours.

In Morino, there was no organization except Jose's small *Liga*, but these young people worked hard, arguing with the villagers singly and in groups, outlining the program of the Republican government, warning them of the menace of the Fascists. Jose learned to be an effective speaker.

"The choice is up to you!" he told the crowd, standing on an old chair in the square. "Will you go back to the old slavery we used to know? Will you let Franco run our lives, so the rich landowners can have a good time in Paris, and make us do all the work, or will you fight for a new life where we can live at last like real human beings, and not like oxen? Do you want that life," he shouted, "and will you *fight* for it? Will you fight Franco and his Moors for Spain and for freedom?"

One old man raised his stick and waved it.

"What about the Church?" he cried, in a thin, cracked voice. "You're going to take God away from us! You're going to close down all the churches!"

Jose shook his head.

"We're not going to close one church!" he shouted back. "Not so long as the priests behave — and stick to their Masses!"

And the young people, for the most part, listened. Less than most Spaniards were these Basques aware of a new day, of the new life ahead for them that Franco would destroy, but soon Jose recognized faint stirrings among them as he pictured it.

Meanwhile, there was no sign of opposition in the village. The few well-off burghers, who, Jose was sure, would sympathize with the Fascists, kept their mouths shut. Sometimes Jose saw them standing beyond the crowd when he was talking. They would listen a few

minutes, perhaps exchange glances, and then walk away without a word of protest. Even Nardiz, the crabbed old mayor, sometimes listened from the window of the village hall above the square, but, to Jose's surprise, he never attempted to break up a meeting.

As to the Church, he understood Father Pedro was ill in bed, while Father Mario, who used to thunder the glories of Alfonso and the horrors of the Republic, now, in his sermons, only piously called upon God to show his people the right path.

Rafael, too, was surprisingly silent. On the morning after the fiesta, Jose had supplied himself with a new and sharp-edged knife before going to the sardine cannery where he and Dolores worked, with Rafael as under-foreman. But Rafael made no menacing gesture. Nothing was said to show whether or not he knew of Jose's strange adventure. He never spoke to Jose, unless he had to. Once, on that first morning, Jose saw him wince when he saw the red welt on Dolores' cheek.

"He's sorry he did it," Jose thought. Forcing back his resentment, he considered ways he might approach his old friend to win him over in the struggle. But Rafael gave him no opportunity. His face was always set, now. He never saw Jose.

During those days, they organized a defensive militia among the young men of the village and country around, and they drilled, unarmed, in the square. Jose was captain, and Luis Danillo lieutenant. More and more joined. They listened enthusiastically while Jose told them and read to them about life among workers of other countries, and they followed the news of the war that had suddenly engulfed the whole nation.

And still there was no protest, no action by the Fascist faction. One day, indeed, Father Mario passed through the square during drill, and Jose saw him stop and smile as he watched. It was the first time Jose had ever seen the priest smile.

"That's too much," Jose thought, as Father Mario walked away, beaming good-naturedly.

That day, after work, Dolores, standing on a chair in the square, made a plea to let the girls join the brigade. At first, some of the young men were shocked, while some even jeered; but as they listened to her stories of women in other people's wars, their disapproving attitude changed. A vote was taken, with admission of young women overwhelmingly approved . . . and shortly after, one by

one, nine or ten girls timidly stepped out from the sidelines and joined the ranks.

Later that day, Jose took Dolores aside.

"I'm leaving tomorrow," he told her. "I'm going to join up. They don't need me here any more."

She looked startled.

"Are you sure everything is all right here, Jose?" she asked. Her eyes turned away from his. "There may be trouble soon, you know," she murmured.

He watched her, smiling.

"It doesn't look that way. I guess we have them cowed," he replied. "You and Luis can take care of the troop. I —" She had turned back to him, and now he glanced down, then quickly up again. "I'll see you before I go?" he asked. He hesitated. "Maybe — alone — for a few minutes?"

He thought he saw a faint flush mount to her cheeks.

"Of course, Jose," she answered, with a little flickering smile.

That night, after supper, he got together the few belongings he would need, and tied them in a dark-colored shirt. His mother sat by, watching. She seldom spoke, and now she said nothing. But he could feel her sharp, dark eyes following his every move.

"It won't be for long, Mama," he said cheerfully, without turning round, as he made a tight knot in the sleeves. "They'll probably have Franco licked and on the run before I get to the front."

"Maybe," she said and was silent.

Jose carried his bundle to his bed. The room, with its lone candle burning steadily in the warm, still air, was oppressive. If she would only say something, even rail at him! He swung around.

"You want me to go, don't you, Mama?" he demanded. "You want your son to fight those foreigners and Fascists, who've come here to make us all slaves again, don't you?"

She looked at him without expression.

"What good would it do if I say 'no'?" she finally asked.

"But you *do* want me to go, at a time like this," he insisted. "You *do* want me to go, even if I — I . . ." He stopped.

His mother continued to gaze at him, but she did not answer.

There was a knock on the door, and Señora Aldez jumped up. Jose went to the pail for a drink of water, and when he came back, she was closing the door, looking at a note in her hand.

"For you," she said, passing it to him.

Jose opened it. It was in a neat feminine hand, and his eyes lit up when he saw the signature.

"Jose," it read, "Will you meet me tonight in the balcony of the church, the end nearest the altar? At half past eleven. That's the only place I know where we're sure no one will see us together. Something very important has happened, and we've got to decide on it tonight.

Dolores."

Jose stared at the note in amazement. Why should Dolores want to meet him in the church? What was this "important" thing all about? His jaw tightened, and he looked up at his mother, who was watching him.

"Who brought this?" he demanded.

"Some child. I couldn't see in the dark outside. What is it?"

"A note about — a meeting," he murmured. He went over to his bed and sat down to think it over.

It looked funny. But who could have sent it, if it wasn't Dolores? Rafael?

He shook his head. Rafael didn't work that way. He'd kill a man in a temper, in the open or anywhere. But he wouldn't work out a careful plan to stab you in the back.

Some of the Fascists? Again, after a moment, he shook his head. They might want him out of the way; but they were wise enough to know if they did him any harm, that would be one of the best ways to turn the whole village against them.

"No," he thought, gazing at the floor, "there's no danger they're trying to get rid of me."

He glanced at the battered alarm clock over the mantle. It was nearly eleven. He half rose, thinking of going directly to Dolores' home, then he sank back. If the note *wasn't* a trick, that was just what she didn't want him to do. After all, he thought, the church *was* a sensible place for them to meet. They couldn't meet indoors anywhere else, and they'd had one bad experience meeting outdoors. He stood up, picked up his beret and jammed it on his head.

"I'm going to a little meeting, Mama," he said, "I'll be back early." He clapped his hand against his back pocket to make sure his knife was there, and went out and down the stairs.

He stopped at the door on the dark alley. On his left, he could see

the square, fifty feet distant. Three young men stood under the lone lamp at the upper end, and in the stillness, their voices echoed loud against the buildings. He didn't go up and along the highway to the front of the church. If any dirty work was planned, that's where they'd be expecting him. Instead, he turned right and walked down the alley.

The small pump square, with its own lone light, was deserted. Jose crossed it, down to another alley. At the head, he turned and looked up, back to the main square.

There was no sign of life, only the young men's voices, muffled now. He turned back and went down the hill.

In a few minutes he reached the quay that ran around the little harbor. Wavelets whispered at his feet, and the black, smooth water beyond glinted in the thick starlight. Right beside him, an empty *barco de pesca* thumped gently against the wall. Jose turned and followed the quay around toward the west, his *alpargatas* noiseless on the stone.

He passed two or three more deserted boats and continued almost to the end of the quay. Now he could just make out the long, high colonnade, and the church rising black above it. When he reached it, he walked along the colonnade, counting the pillars until he reached the sixth. Here he stopped.

As a boy, it had been a stunt of the more daring to climb this post, nicked by time, to the balcony. Rafael used to do it easily; Jose and two or three others without much more difficulty. But it was a different thing at night, he thought, gazing upward. However —

Embracing the square pillar as well as he could, he lifted his foot and found the first niche. Then, slowly, he began to mount.

Years without practice, *plus* the darkness, made it almost impossible. Once, more than halfway up, the rotten stucco broke off. His foot and left hand slipped, and he hung, motionless, one hand and one foot gripping, until he regained his balance. Then he went on. Three minutes later, he grasped the rail and pulled himself over.

Breathless, he rested a moment over the thick wall covered with fishing nets. Above him, the myriad of tiny sharp stars stretched from the black mountains down to the horizon, and beneath him, were reflected, paler and blurred, across the still sea. There was the black bulk of a schooner beyond the harbor, with motionless lights, one red, one green, at either end. Lights of deeper yellow shone here and

there in the otherwise darkened village. Jose raised himself and glanced right and left.

The broad balcony was empty to the ends of the church. He walked, on noiseless feet, to the right, paused at the corner to glance around, and then continued, keeping close to the building. Halfway down, he stopped.

Here was a little side door, always unlocked, he remembered, like the great main doorway. He found the knob, turned it, and pushed open the door.

Cool, dead air touched his face. He stepped inside and gently closed the door behind him. Then he crossed beneath the balcony to the line of pillars, and at the edge of the nave, he halted, unconsciously pulling off his beret.

He felt its solemn height, though he could see nothing. Only, far off, the altar light gleamed, one red eye in the blackness. It seemed to advance menacingly as he looked at it, and he turned his face away. A shiver passed over him; it seemed so strange to enter a church like this.

Feeling his way from post to post, he moved up to the balcony stairway, near the main entrance. And as he continued, hearing the soft thud of his canvas soles in the deathly silence, he wondered more and more at Dolores' choosing this place. It might be sensible, he thought, but it was so . . . somber. His fingers found the stair rail, and he turned and felt his way up to the balcony; went farther up, feeling the five lines of pews, to the aisle at the top.

Here he stopped and strained his eyes, peering before him, but he could see nothing. He walked on, one hand on the pew backs, one hand brushing the wall, until he reached the end.

He stood a moment uncertainly.

"Dolores?" He hardly breathed the name, but it sounded loud. And after that, silence closed in, the hollow silence of a huge, empty building.

It was probably too early, he thought, but an uneasiness was slowly creeping over him. He told himself that a church was one place where no man would dare attack him, but his hand moved back to caress the hard surface of the knife in his pocket. Then he raised his head and whispered again,

"Dolores?"

There was no answer. But as he stood listening, he thought he

heard a slight stir in the nave below. Finding the pew back, he felt his way down the five steps to the rail. He leaned over and listened.

He could see the altar light now, way below him — one living red spark in the massed darkness. Standing very still, he peered down into nothing. The church was quiet again.

Suddenly, he remembered there was, of course, a balcony on the other side of the nave, and he lifted his head to call. But the strangeness and somberness were having their effect; his heart was beating fast, and no sound came from his lips.

For long seconds, he stood hypnotized, the darkness pressing down on him. Far above him, muffled, sounded a *clang!* as the clock in the belfry struck the half hour. The noise filled the church . . . died away, leaving it more silent than ever.

He shook himself, hard; gazed directly before him toward the opposite balcony.

"*Dolores!*" he whispered hoarsely.

A moment's quiet. Then he was leaning over the rail. This time there was no mistaking the soft creak below him.

He bent forward, straining his eyes. There it was again — a sound like a creaking board from somewhere under this balcony. Again, some distance away, though still beneath the balcony. All at once he swung around and gazed at the altar in amazement.

A reflected light shimmered faintly on the gold and marble. Was there somebody beneath him with a torch or candles?

In another instant he knew the answer. The truth struck him with a wave of horror, leaving him unable to move, while he saw the reflected light leap higher and higher, heard the crackle grow louder beneath him, saw a flame spring up under the balcony across, spring up, crackling, pale blue, beneath a pew by the altar, beside a pew near the transept, run, with terrific speed, in a straight line the length of the church.

9. FATHER MARIO had been quietly entertaining a few prominent citizens that evening. But as time passed, he seemed preoccupied, even nervous; he continually glanced out the open window, next to the church. Once or twice his guests politely suggested leaving, but each time, Father Mario jumped up protesting, and refilled the wine glasses.

It was while they were discussing Franco's advance that the priest held up his hand for silence.

The others paused expectantly. Father Mario started to speak, clearing his throat.

"Do you, Señores —" he coughed, "do you hear anything?" he asked.

One of his guests came to the window and leaned out. At last he pulled his head back.

"Something like a rustling paper or a crackling board," he murmured. As he went to sit down, Father Mario quietly got up and left the room.

A minute later he appeared at the window. His lips were quivering, his eyes popping.

"Come!" he cried hoarsely. "All of you! Come quick!"

When Father Mario's five guests came running up to the church, they, too, stopped in horror. Through the open door they could see flames leaping around the altar. While they stood petrified, three strolling young men came running up to join them, with shouts of excitement.

The flames mounted, curled around the lonely figure of a life-sized Christ on his cross behind the altar. Suddenly Father Mario screamed and clapped his hands before his eyes. But the others paid no attention to him.

For at that moment a young man appeared at the doorway and dashed outside. He stopped short in bewilderment before the little group.

"The church!" he stuttered. "The church is on fire!"

Mayor Nardiz stepped forward.

"So we can see for ourselves," he snapped. "And what were *you* doing inside?" he demanded.

"Me? Why, I went in to —." The young man stopped. "I just went in," he said lamely.

The mayor stepped closer. Then he laughed, shortly and harshly.

"What I might have expected!" he cried, turning around. "It's the leader of our church-burning Anarchists, young Aldez!"

Jose cried out in protest as the others came nearer.

"*I* burn the church? You're crazy!" He started forward. "What would I —" But Nardiz grasped his arm.

"Here, you fellows!" he shouted to the three young men, "take hold of him and see he doesn't escape!"

The young men came hesitantly forward. Jose tried to collect his thoughts; to explain; but he only succeeded in stammering while he talked to everybody at once. When he again started forward, two of the young men, one belonging to his brigade, took his arm. The third, also of his brigade, came close to him.

"Jose!" he called, as if Jose were far away. He looked into Jose's eyes. "Jose! Did you burn the church?"

Jose was still sputtering, trying to speak. Now he stopped, turned to look at the young man. He took a deep breath.

"You know I didn't burn the church, Diego," he said slowly.

Diego breathed a sigh of relief. He laid his hand on Jose's shoulder.

"I'll be with you, Jose," he said simply. The other member of the brigade hesitated, then dropped Jose's arm. But he stood close to him.

The pews and the whole nave were a mass of roaring flames now, while fire licked out of open windows. From the square below came the discordant banging of the village bell, calling the alarm. Father Mario still stood with his hands before his eyes, muttering incoherently, but Mayor Nardiz stepped over and jerked his arm.

"Here's the Anarchist firebug, Father!" he shouted. "Do your duty, and denounce him!"

Father Mario stared at the mayor in bewilderment.

"Denounce him!" the other snarled, glaring at him. "Denounce the Anarchist!"

"Oh, yes," whispered the priest. "I denounce him." Suddenly he whirled back to the church. "*La hostia!*" he screamed. "*La hostia!*" He started for the church door, but was held back by two of his friends. For a moment he stood sobbing, mouth open, tears streaming down his cheeks. Then, with a quick jerk, he freed himself and rushed for the parish house.

"What have I done?" he cried, so thickly no one could understand him. "Holy Mother of God, what have I done?"

The crowd poured up from the square, some half dressed, some

with only a coat thrown over their naked bodies. They halted and stood in huddled groups, awed by the great burning building, murmuring in subdued voices, moving slowly back as the flames mounted now to the roof. Jose, between his captors, also moved slowly away from the fire; his back was to it, and he watched the crowd.

He understood now. He was right when he decided they wouldn't kill him. They had much better use for him alive. He laughed a little at the thought, though his heart was beating rapidly.

The hand on one of his arms tightened.

"Laughing at your dirty work, are you?" growled the young man. But Diego swung around to him.

"Maybe he's laughing at what fools some of you are, *amigo*," he said, sharply. "Stick to your job and keep your mouth shut!"

Meanwhile, the mayor and two or three others were moving among the crowd. So long as the flames leaped high, the people had thoughts only for their burning church. But after the roof caved in, with a thunderous crash, sending showers of sparks into the sky and far over the village and the crowd; after the solemn exclamations and the frightened cries of the children, they lowered their eyes to the young man standing between his captors. Their murmurings rose, and they moved nearer.

Jose could hear the mayor shouting. Now and then he could see the little man, bouncing up and down, urging them on.

"*Anarchist!*" Jose distinguished certain words screamed above the rising clamor. "*Church burner!*" "*Atheist!*"

Now, however, the two man gendarmerie came running around the church, after futile efforts to help put out the fire. With sharp commands to Jose's three guards, they led the way through the crowd, shoving people aside. As he followed, Jose tried to keep his eyes straight ahead, but he was aware of the burning eyes, the wide-opened mouths that roared and screamed, the men's shaking fists, and women's hands that clawed at him between his captors. These, for the most part, were older people; the younger men and girls watched him, tense and bewildered. Once, he caught a quick glimpse of his mother's white face, and he smiled weakly to her; then he went on, eyes before him. Above all the din, he could hear the shrieking exhortations of Mayor Nardiz, that followed him down to the square and the village hall, where he was led to the basement and locked in the lone cell.

Throughout most of the night, he heard the mob in the open square, beyond the alley which his cell faced. Sometimes there was only a faint babble; then, following some shouted speech — he could never get the words of it — it would rise to a roar. Sometimes, then, he would hear them rush for the alley, to be repulsed by a patrol, made up, he realized, from his own brigade. At dawn, he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he was awakened about nine o'clock, to be led, after a bowl of coffee and a hunk of bread, to the magistrate's office.

The hearing, with the wizened Mayor Nardiz presiding, was a farce. He leaned forward, his sparse gray hair over his forehead, shaking his mallet at Jose, and snarling at him with triumph, to the applause of many of those who crowded into the little chamber. Through it all, Jose gazed silently and gravely at the man. Once, only, he spoke.

Preceded by a sudden hush, Father Mario came into the room. He made his way to the stand beside the mayor. His face was white and drawn, his eyes red. Hands folded before him, eyes downcast, he told the story of discovering the fire, in a voice so low only those nearby could hear him. Finally, he stopped. There was a moment's silence.

"Well," said the mayor, sharply, "did you see any one leaving the church, Father?"

The priest nodded, eyes still lowered. The mayor waited.

"Well!" he snapped again, even more sharply. "Who was it, Father?"

The priest swallowed.

"It was — I think it was," he whispered, "Jose Aldez."

"Father!"

All eyes turned to Jose. He stood very erect, gazing at the priest. Father Mario raised his head, with startled eyes.

"Am I guilty, Father?" Jose asked, his voice loud in the silence.

The priest stared at Jose, his eyes large and fearful. Then, once more, his head sank.

"Father!" Jose demanded even louder. "Am I guilty?"

Still no answer. Mayor Nardiz coughed.

"It is not for a priest to pass judgment upon you," he stated angrily. "That is for the court. You will be taken to the proper court for the next assizes, as soon as convenient." At a nod from the mayor, Jose's

guards took his arm and led him through the hostile throng, back to his cell.

Here he sat on his hard cot, staring unseeingly at the wall across that was scarcely visible in the eternal gloom. At set intervals, a shadow and a rhythmic tread told him a sentry was passing his window, but he did not look up. He knew these were not the friends who had guarded him the night before. He wondered, in fact, if he had any friends left.

All that morning he could hear haranguing voices in the square, and they were not the voices of Dolores or Luis, or the others of his brigade. This was a rapid-fire, intensive propaganda, and he caught such words and phrases as, "*Communists!*" *Church burners!*" "*Mola and Franco, the liberators of Spain!*" followed by lurid pictures of far worse things than the firing of the church to come, if the "Communists" were not defeated.

And sitting there, Jose would listen sadly to the applause — not enthusiastic applause, as in the old days, but still applause. He shut his eyes, and tried to shut his ears to the voices. Slowly, he was forgetting, was drifting off into a light sleep, when —

"*Jose!*"

Jose jumped up and whirled toward the barred window.

10. LUIS DANILLO was crouching there, faithful Luis, the Marquesa de Valera's gardener. His ugly and simple looking face peered through the bars at Jose.

As Jose strode across to him, he was suddenly aware of complete silence.

"What's up?" he demanded. "Where's the sentry?"

Luis grinned.

"Do you think even war would keep one of these boys from taking his siesta. He's squatting down by the wall up there —" Luis jerked his head toward the highway, "snoring like a trooper — which he isn't." Luis' face became serious. "We've got to get you out, Jose," he whispered. "They're taking you tomorrow to Vitoria instead of Bilbao, where you're as good as condemned if they even bother to try you. Another thing —" Luis hesitated.

"Go on," murmured Jose.

"A couple of fellows work out at the marquesa's — they've been seeing American pictures, I guess — they were talking about coming in the village and getting a crowd and 'having some fun'."

Jose clenched the bars.

"*Virgen santisima!*" he breathed.

Luis shrugged, glancing up the alley.

"It doesn't mean anything. They're too lazy to stir themselves, but —"

Jose shook the bars.

"You couldn't file these things, not in hours," he muttered.

Luis shook his head.

"And we couldn't storm the damned jail. There's not enough of us. The *other* boys could get through all right — but not us."

Jose clapped his hands before his eyes, then quickly drew them away again. For a while the two young men talked in low, hurried tones, until Luis put his finger to his lips.

"Jose," he whispered, "he's stopped snoring."

"Luis, see our people," Jose said, jerkily, "quick! before they take me away — or before a gang really — Luis!" he gasped, drawing closer to the bars, "do you hear, Luis?"

But Luis was gone.

All afternoon Jose paced his cell, unable to rest. He had intended, rather than try to escape, to face the court and vindicate himself, but

in Vitoria, already known as a Fascist center, he would have little opportunity. The chances were he'd never get there.

The afternoon dragged on. There were no chimes from the old church tower now. Time was marked only by the rhythmic pace of the sentry beyond his window. The world outside grew gray. He heard the old jailor shuffle down the corridor, heard the grating of the key in the lock, and his bowl of cold stew and a broken pitcher of water were thrust into his cell.

He tried to eat, but his stomach wouldn't take it. He laid the bowl on the hard floor and slouched on his cot, watching the gray outside thicken to dusk, then slowly black out to nothing. The hours of unchanging darkness were years. Was it eleven o'clock? . . . Was it midnight? . . . Surely it should be dawn now! . . .

A light step was coming down the corridor. It stopped outside his door. Jose sat up, tense.

A short pause. Then a key was quietly fitted into the door. It turned, and the door creaked open. A silence followed, while Jose stared in that direction.

At last.

"Jose?"

"Yes," Jose whispered.

A torch flashed on, blinding Jose, then was quickly snapped off as the sentry approached.

Both waited motionless, until he passed. Then,

"Come!" Jose could detect nervousness even in that short whisper.

"Who are you?" he breathed.

"Does it matter? I've come to free you. Only hurry!"

Jose stood up, drew a match from his pocket, and struck it. In its flickering light he could see young Nardiz, the mayor's son.

"You!" he exclaimed. "Why do *you* want to free me?"

"Do I have to believe like my father?" Nardiz answered, hurriedly. "I've become a Communist. Hurry, before it's too late!"

Still Jose hesitated.

"How did you get in?" he demanded, moving toward the door.

"Don't you think my father has keys? Don't you think I know where to find them? Now — oh, you're coming." Jose heard him step back, down the corridor. "Turn to your right," he whispered. "I'll light the way when I have to."

Slowly, feeling along the wall, Jose moved up the corridor, away

from the jail entrance. The light behind him flashed on, and he saw a turn before him.

"Around there," whispered Nardiz. "Up the little flight of stairs to the town hall offices."

His heart thumping, Jose felt his way around the corner and stumbled up the steps. At the top he found a partly opened door and passed through it. He heard Nardiz follow and gently shut the door behind him.

"All right, fellows," he whispered. He flashed on his torch.

Jose made out five figures, five pairs of eyes glinting in the light. Silently they approached him.

"Came like a lamb," chuckled Nardiz. "A little surprised to find *me* freeing him, but — oh!" He stopped. "*Who are you?*" he gasped.

"Old friends," muttered a voice. Jose saw a gun rise, while another torch flashed on.

"But you're — you're Danillo!" sputtered Nardiz. "It's you who gave me the idea! Are you — are you —"

"With you? No." Luis laughed, shortly. "I just gave you the idea. I was pretty sure what a fellow like you would do when I said I was afraid someone might start a private little lynching party. Move on!" he commanded. "Your friends are in the next room! Move!"

He shoved the dazed young man on with the muzzle of his gun. Jose followed.

"Worked out all right?" he asked.

"Just like you figured. I could even see the idea working in Nardiz' mind. He could get in the jail easy and he and a few friends would carry off you and the glory . . . And *we* could slip in the village hall door when they got inside like we did." They were in the other room now, where an invisible friend held a flash and a gun trained on three frightened young men. "March!" ordered Luis, in a low voice. "Quick! One bad step, and you get the butt of a gun on the side the head. Two, and none of you make any more steps, good or bad!"

One of the brigade preceding them cautiously, the others guarding the rear, they slipped out of the hall, into the deserted highway. To their right they could hear the staccato tread of the sentry, his steps echoing in the alley. They turned left.

"Move fast — and softly," muttered Luis.

The group moved down the deserted, wooded road. Jose breathed

deep with joy. There was little chance of anyone's passing at that place or hour; but if someone did, the wild country he knew so well was all around him. A kilometer beyond the village, they halted.

"You can go back now," Luis said shortly to Nardiz and his friends. "And if you're wise, you'll keep quiet about how you helped Aldez escape." They watched the silent group move away, then turned and went on. Fifteen minutes later, by a great tree that leaned over the road, Luis stopped abruptly.

"All right now, Jose?"

"Couldn't be safer."

"Good luck. And you can know we'll be working here, or we'll see you in the army."

Jose shook hands with them and then stood hesitating as they disappeared in the darkness. After a few moments, he took a step after them, and immediately whirled about at a slight sound beside him.

"Jose!"

He could just make out her slim figure as she stepped into the road.

"Dolores! I was going back to see you! I had to —" Suddenly she was in his arms. "I love you, Dolores!" he whispered. "I love you more than anything in the world!"

Her hand slipped up to his face. She felt his wet eyes.

"Jose," she breathed.

"You understand?" he murmured brokenly; he held her tighter, as tight as he could. "You understand? I love you, I love you, oh God, how I love you!"

Shouts crossed the still night from the distant village. Dolores pulled back.

"Go, Jose!" she said. "Quick!"

But still he held her.

"Tell me —" he started, "tell me —"

She drew his head down to hers, brushed her lips against his wet cheek.

"I love you, Jose," she whispered.

He pressed her cheeks with both his hands, kissed her lips, hard. Then he turned and ran up the road.

Dolores stood very still until the sound of his running feet died away, leaving only the faraway shouting and the mournful cry of an owl in the hills above her.

11.

"AND how is my cousin, the corporal, this evening?"

Jose glanced up at the words. In the dull gray twilight, the face of the young man standing over him seemed more pallid, even, than usual. Now deep lines in his cheek were as black as the thin open mouth, while the eyes seemed colorless as they watched him. Jose shifted the leg stretched out on a cushioned chair, and winced.

"All right," he muttered. "I'd be more all right, though, if I could get back in the lines." He turned to look out of the window.

Above the low, stuccoed house next door, he could see, in the fading distance, the long line of white imposing buildings, now deep in shadow. These were the hotels, the cafés and casinos of San Sebastian, today as empty as so many mausoleums. But Jose did not think of that, did not even see the buildings he was looking at. He was listening to the irregular burst of rifle fire, the monotonous *rat-tat-tat* of machine guns, the occasional crash of shell fire.

Listlessly, he turned back. His distant cousin, Juan Aldez, was peering out of the window and listening. His colorless eyes glistened more brightly, like shining glass.

"It's — it's getting closer," said Jose, in a low voice.

Juan Aldez turned back and looked fully at him.

"Yes," he said, equally low, but distinctly, "it's getting closer."

Jose sighed. If only he could get up, take his gun, and go back to the lines! He could hobble, it was true, but a man hobbling around wouldn't be of much use.

It had been only a nick, as he called it, in the calf of his leg, received from a rebel officer's pistol at close range, two days before. It had been his first wound — which amazed him, seeing that even during the short time he had served, the casualties on both sides had been tremendous. Worse than any wound, though, was the news that filtered in from home.

It had started soon after he joined his troops. For four weeks, after his escape from Morino, he had trained in an ill-equipped Loyalist camp, part of the time with a stick on his shoulder instead of a gun, always without a uniform. It hadn't been long before his loyalty and intelligence, as well as his fair knowledge of the forces behind the war — unusual in his neighborhood — had been recognized. When, a month later, he had at last gone up to the lines, it was with a corporal's chevron. Here, on his second day, as new recruits ap-

peared from Morino or one of the nearby villages, he began hearing tales, each more startling than the last, that left him lying sleepless through the nights, staring up at the warm summer sky, behind the makeshift barricades. Following the burning of the church, they told him, a barn had gone up in flames; then, one night, a farmhouse just beyond the village had been destroyed, a bedridden old woman dying in the fire. Jose, "the escaped church-burner, with a band of Communists" was accused of the terrorism, and daily, in the village square, the officials and influential citizens would exhort the people, "This is a taste of what's to come, if the Communist terrorists are not suppressed!"

Jose would toss back and forth on his hard earth bed. If only he could do something about it, he thought, if only he could go back and kill off the murderers, tell his people what fools they were to listen! Or if only there was someone he could turn to, back there, someone who could talk to the people. There was Father Pedro, of course, but Jose had learned some time before that the old priest was taken ill about the time of the fire, and had been in seclusion ever since.

"If he was just well enough to get out of bed and speak in church," Jose thought, gazing up at the stars. "I'd steal back to Morino and talk to him! I *know* he would believe me," he muttered, half aloud, "and *he* would set them right, Holy Mother, he would set them right in a minute!" But Father Pedro was too ill, dying, Father Mario had hinted. And Jose would toss around again, in helpless agony.

Later volunteers brought in stories of the growing uneasiness and uncertainty of the villagers. And then, as they hesitated, the terrorism spread. A church in the neighboring village of Andurra went up in flames; another, further to the west. Several other farms, near neighboring villages, were destroyed. And, finally, the murder of a priest on his altar "proved" the Communists would not rest until the entire priesthood had been wiped out. The fact that the young priest had that day expressed his sympathy with the Loyalists was never mentioned when throughout these villages along the ocean highway, the natives were harangued and ridden with a fear of incredible horrors to come if the "Nationalists, fighting for God and for King" were not supported.

It was easy for Jose to understand this vicious, relentless attack on the untutored people. These villages were along the easiest approach

to Bilbao, capital of Euzkadi, and capture of that city might lead to isolation of the whole section, cut off, as it was, from the rest of Loyalist Spain. And the sense of helplessness, the mental torture, when he thought of the use his name was being put to, made it almost a relief when, at last, he was physically wounded.

He begged to stay on, but the surgeon insisted he was useless. And after a hasty bandaging in the overworked first-aid station, he limped, without help, back to the city. The hospitals, he knew, were full and overflowing; so he went, reluctantly, to his relatives in the Calle San Jeronimo.

The small hideous house of pink stucco was a tightly respectable affair in a tightly respectable street. Jose vaguely remembered visiting it as a child with his father, and liking neither it nor his cousin. His and Juan's fathers were first cousins, but the latter had married enough money to put him in the petty bourgeois class, enabling him thus to look down on his working relatives. However, shortly after the Loyalist occupation of San Sebastian, when Jose had been able to pay his cousin a quick visit, Juan appeared only too delighted to see him.

"So you're fighting with the Loyalists, are you," he said, clapping him on the back. "Myself, I just came back from a little trip —" he coughed, then went hurriedly on, "but I intend to join up right away!" Juan's parents were dead, but he led Jose to his aunt, owner of the house, an incredibly ancient and deaf woman, who sat huddled in a dark room in the rear.

"This is my cousin, Jose! — on father's side!" he shouted to the woman. "He's fighting with the Loyalists!"

"Eh?" cackled his aunt.

Juan repeated, even louder, moving his lips widely. The old woman frowned.

"Who's fighting who?" she demanded querulously.

Juan leaned close to her.

"The Loyalists!" he screamed. "My side, too!"

"Well," snapped his aunt, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, fighting at your age!" And she closed her eyes to end the interview.

Now, sitting in the dusk with his cousin, Jose suddenly thought of the old woman, to whom, for all his pain, he had hobbled in to pay his respects, two days before. True, she had been as ungracious and as uninterested in "Loyalists" and "fighting" as before. With the

rebel guns closer to the city, his cousin had not been so affable when Jose asked for a few days in which to convalesce, but that made no difference, Jose thought, if they were in danger. Sitting upright in his chair, he laid his hand on Juan's.

"Juan," he said, scarcely above a whisper, "you have been out today. Do you think — do you think —" He could not finish it.

Juan gazed steadily at him.

"Do I think the rebels will take the city?" he asked distinctly.

Jose nodded.

A queer look came in Juan's eyes and immediately disappeared.

"I do," he replied. "I hear the — er — Loyalists plan to give it up soon, without a blow. A 'tactical' retreat," he murmured, gazing at the ceiling, "I believe they call it."

Jose sucked in his breath.

"Then," he said, at last, "you must get me out of here. They'll let *you* go free, since you haven't been active with us. But if they find you've been harboring me —." He ran his finger across his throat then he set his good foot on the floor and clutched the arm of his chair to rise.

But now alarm appeared in Juan's eyes.

"No, no, Cousin Jose!" he exclaimed. "You think I would let you out of my house, wounded? My own relative? You're mad!" He pushed Jose firmly back in his chair.

"But if I'm found here —"

"That is for me to worry about. And now —" Juan thrust his arm under Jose's for support, "now, your medicine, and bed." As Jose protested, he tightened his grip and started to raise him. "Listen, Jose," he declared, "I swear to you that even if the rebels take the city, nothing will happen to my aunt or myself — and you will be taken care of!"

Jose, still protesting, limped to the bed and dropped wearily on it. He protested as, in the dying light, he watched Juan pour out the sedative powder he had been giving him to ease his great pain. Juan mixed it with water from the carafe beside him and held up his hand.

"Don't you want to be rested if you *have* to fight the rebels in the streets here?" he demanded. He raised Jose and held him while he drank. "Now," he said, as he laid him gently back and set the glass down, "don't worry. I'll take care of you!" He smoothed the pillow, slipping his hand beneath it to do so, but Jose instinctively clamped

down on his hand and smiled at him. Nobody else could touch the pistol that had been under that pillow ever since he entered the room.

Juan smiled back at him. Jose could scarcely see his face now, save for the eyes gazing down at him.

"*Buenas noches*," Juan murmured. He took a few steps away, then stopped and listened. Jose listened, too.

Still, with monotonous regularity, came the shriek and crash of the shells. But was the crackle of the machine guns, the sharp crack of rifles, closer? Juan remained motionless a minute.

Suddenly Juan half stooped to a low chest. Then he turned around to peer at Jose.

"*Buenas noches*," Jose said.

Juan raised himself.

"*Buenas noches*," he repeated. He tiptoed out, gently closing the door behind him.

Jose lay staring at the pale light, glinting on the panels of the otherwise invisible door. For a moment he forgot the approaching peril in his shame at his antipathy for Juan. After all, Juan had given up his own room to him, that being the only prepared room when Jose stumbled into the house, and now he was promising to stand by Jose, no matter what the danger.

"He's a decent fellow," Jose thought. "I ought to get kicked!"

He turned his head toward the window. Sharp and continuous, sounded the gunfire, and flashes of cold light threw the distant buildings momentarily into sharp relief. Yet, despite that, a listlessness crept over Jose.

"I ought to get up," he thought drowsily, "I ought to get up and fight."

The thunder grew deafening. It was a cloudburst over Morino, and the hail poured down all around him. The stones never touched him, but everywhere he could see and hear them, *rat-a-tat*, *rat-a-tat-tat*.

People were running out of their houses, and the stones pounded down on them as they crowded into the square. Jose heard their horrible shrieks, saw their wild eyes and agonized expressions as they fell, while some, whom the hail did not touch, danced around, screaming with mad glee. He had to go help them. He writhed in his bed, trying to get to them. *Wait a minute! Wait a minute!* he called. He beat his arms out in a desperate attempt, and opened his eyes.

Where was he? He lay staring up. He could still hear the deafening *rat-a-tat-tat* of the hail, and, far away, the terrifying screams. He passed his hand across his eyes — and then he lay still again, forgetting the noises. There was another menace, he knew, much closer.

An oblong of faint light directly ahead of him showed the door was open. Noiselessly, he pulled himself up on his elbow and peered forward. He could make out a figure crouching at the foot of his bed.

He slipped his hand beneath his pillow and pulled out his gun.

"Get out!" he shouted. "Get out, or I'll shoot!"

The figure jerked upright and whirled toward him.

"Get out!" he yelled. "If you're not out before I —" But the man was gone. The light vanished as the door was shut.

Jose sat, hands pressed to his temples, and the haze passed — to be replaced by a horrible realization.

The city had been evacuated! The rebels were in the streets, and those shrieks and demoniacal screams were from the defenseless inhabitants and the blood-maddened invaders!

Jose threw off his bedclothes and sat upright on the edge of the bed. Feeling in the dark for his old corduroy trousers that he had worn through the fighting, and that lay on the chair beside him, he found them and pulled them on. In his haste, he tore the flimsy bandage off his leg, and he knew he had opened his wound, but he didn't bother about that.

"I've got to get out of here," he muttered. Juan must have made a mistake and given him an extra dose of his sedative, or he wouldn't have slept through all this. He swung toward the door.

It was Juan, of course, who had come in and stooped to look for something in his chest when he woke. Jose carefully stood up.

Outside, the firing was sharper, though more sporadic. But the shrieks of terror and pain, and the mad howls of the soldiers were growing louder, coming closer. Jose limped quickly toward the door. He had to get out of the house right away! Juan and his aunt must be protected!

He reached the door and felt for the handle. He could hear feet running, then a prolonged wail, followed by a man's wild laugh.

He felt around frantically. He must get out, he must get out! He found the knob at last, and pulled it. It didn't give, and he yanked it.

And then his hand dropped, as he realized the unbelievable truth.

The door was locked.

12.

FOR a moment he stood helpless, hardly aware of the approaching tumult. Then he began hammering on the door.

"Juan!" he called, "Juan! *por tu madre*, let me out!"

The only answer was the echo of his cry, sounding through the room above the roar from outside. Did his idiot cousin, in his quixotism, think that simply locking him in the room would save them all? Again he pounded on the door, shouting to Juan. Then he stopped, as suddenly as he commenced.

Close by, so near he almost jumped, he heard a whisper.

"Don't fret, Jose," said the voice through the keylock, "I told you you'll be taken care of."

"But — but — " Jose was bewildered, "they'll surely get me if you lock me in here! And then what will happen to you and your aunt?"

There was a little laugh on the other side of the door.

"I have something in safe keeping," Juan replied, "which will straighten everything for my aunt and myself with the Nationalists. *Nationalists*, Cousin Jose." Jose heard the voice draw away, "remember that — for your own good!"

Jose stood, his mouth open, rigid. His cousin *couldn't* be that treacherous! He *couldn't* — A scream, scarcely two doors away, brought him to himself. He shook his head, shaking away anger and horror, and then clapped his hands before his eyes, thinking rapidly.

He knew the door was flimsy. Perhaps if he could break it down in time. He limped to the window and peered out. In the lampless street below, dimly lit by the thick stars overhead, black figures were approaching in fantastic fashion, some staggering, only to fall and remain motionless, some waving their arms wildly amid unearthly screams and howls. Now and then there was a flash, a report, and another dark figure sank in the middle of the road. And slowly, the hellish procession was moving toward him. He started for the door, caught his trouser leg on something, and stopped.

He squatted down, ran his hand over the low chest, and felt a little key protruding. That had not been there before. Juan undoubtedly had slipped it in the lock, just before Jose frightened him away. Jose, his face bathed in sweat, dropped to his knees. He sought madly in his pocket, found a match, struck it, and turning the key, opened the chest.

A hammering on the door of the little house alongside brought Jose to his feet. He heard the curses, the thump of rifles, the crash of glass, and finally, the shout of triumph as the soldiers broke in. His gun in his pocket, Jose snatched a coat of Juan's, threw it on, and hurled himself against the door.

It was not as flimsy as it seemed, and again and again he crashed against it. Every move made his leg throb with pain, but he scarcely noticed it. He was listening to the screams from the next house, the echoing laughter of the soldiers finally emerging, the sound of hob-nailed boots on the pavement as they approached this house. He stepped back and catapulted against the door, and it flew open.

He staggered outside, pulled himself quickly upright, and jerked his gun from his pocket. He was directly at the head of the stairs, and he could see his cousin below. Juan was standing at the door beyond, agitated, and irresolutely turning his head from the door to the stairs.

"*Juan!*" he called.

Juan swung around to see the gun pointed down at him. A look of horror crossed his face, and he held up a defensive hand. Jose touched the trigger, saw Juan stand motionless, that look of horror imprinted forever on his face, then spin around and crash on the floor. A loud thump sounded on the outer door, followed by the crack of a rifle butt against it.

Jose limped down as quickly as he could. The door was still intact when he reached the bottom of the steps. He crossed to it, turned the key, and pulled it open.

"Welcome, in the name of God and the Nationalist Army!" he cried.

A burly sergeant thrust him back as he stormed in. Behind him came two tanned, lean-faced Legionnaires. Beyond, Jose could see a small group of prisoners — too important, probably, to be shot offhand — huddled between other mercenaries. Jose recognized one as a middle-aged butcher, ardent worker for the Loyalists. Knowledge of certain death was written on the man's face, but his eyes met Jose's without a sign of recognition. The sergeant whirled on Jose.

"We'll find out soon about the welcome," he snapped, "who the hell are you?" And, suddenly seeing the dead body of Juan, "*Por la puta de tu madre!*" he roared, "who the hell's that fellow?"

"I killed him," Jose answered quietly. "He was a — a Commu-

nist quartered here. He tried to escape just now, and shot me —" Jose pointed to his leg, where the blood from the open wound was seeping through the bullet tear in his trousers. "I grabbed the gun from him," he went on, "and killed him."

The sergeant gazed at the body, then looked quickly back at Jose, suspicion in his eyes.

"*Bueno*. And who the hell are you, I asked?"

"My name's Aldez, a good Nationalist."

"This your home?"

"It's my aunt's, Señorita Ruelda."

The sergeant swung to the man behind him.

"Ruelda, at this address. Got it?" he demanded.

The private looked through a list.

"Ruelda . . ." he mumbled. "Ruelda — here. Calle San Jeromino, 96. Good Catholic; royalist."

The sergeant turned back. Jose's heart was beating fast, but he remained outwardly calm. The sergeant seemed thwarted and angry.

"What have you been doing in this town all this time?" he suddenly roared.

Jose started to answer, when a voice called out from the sidewalk, "I know you!" He looked beyond the mercenaries, to see the butcher pointing at him. "You're one of the dirtiest Fascists round here!" A hand smashed across the butcher's face.

A feeling of anguish almost overwhelmed Jose. This man, going to certain death, was trying to protect him. Suddenly his right fist clenched, and his hand started upward in the salute he now knew so well. And as suddenly his arm fell. This was no moment for heroics, when alive he could do so much! He looked squarely at the butcher, whose face streamed with blood.

"You're a brave man," he said coldly.

The butcher looked back with unflickering eyes. But one corner of his mouth twitched in a smile. The sergeant gave Jose a shove.

"Put him in the other bunch, corporal," he snapped.

Jose started for the door. He sighed with relief at the thought that the first skirmish, anyhow, was successfully over, when a sharp cry behind made him whirl around. Old Señorita Ruelda, bundled in voluminous nightclothes, was standing in the doorway, staring at the dead body.

"My nephew!" she screamed; "my nephew!"

For a moment, Jose's heart sank. Then, slipping past the sergeant, he ran to the deaf old woman and threw his arms around her.

"There, there, my aunt," he said, soothingly, in a low voice, "don't worry!"

"Eh?" she cackled, "what? What's the matter with him?" Her voice rose. "Is he dead? Is he dead?"

"Yes," Jose murmured, "he's dead. The man's dead." Then, loudly, "He was a Communist — A LOYALIST, they call it!"

"What? Yes, yes, a Loyalist, he said — always fighting — is he dead? Is he dead?"

But now a hand fell on Jose's shoulder. As gently as possible, he turned the woman around.

"GO TO BED!" he yelled in her ear. "WE'LL TEND TO HIM!" He didn't have time to see what she did, for he was pulled around and shoved through the door, the sergeant and privates crowding after him.

The march, between guards, was not a long one, but to Jose, it seemed a lifetime. Weeks of desperate fighting had not hardened him for the sights he witnessed on his journey through that pillaged city. The dead lay strewn in the gutters and on the sidewalks. Sometimes he had to step over them. The guards, as a rule, stepped on them. An old man, writhing on his belly in the middle of the street looked ludicrously as though he were feebly trying to swim. As they approached him, his movements became more feeble, and at last ceased altogether. Three Legionnaires were silently, grimly, dragging away a girl of thirteen or fourteen, who held out her arms, screaming, to a dark, motionless form nearby. A brain-spattered baby, right at his feet, was the last such sight Jose saw before he raised his head and looked determinedly above him.

As they swung through an arched gateway, the sergeant turned to him.

"You're a Basque, are you?" There was contempt in his voice.

Jose nodded.

"I thought so." The man spat. "A filthy people. But we got one of your own to take care of your kind — a young lieutenant. Don't be smart with him. He gets rough." They crossed a courtyard, and went on, single file, down a dark corridor.

Jose was herded into a large room, already filled to overflowing,

and suffocating with tobacco smoke. What, he thought, must the places be like where they put the people they really suspect? Around him, for the most part, were fairly prosperous-looking burghers. Some laughed and joked, praised loudly the success of the rebels; some were silent. But all, beneath calm exteriors, looked worried.

As the night wore on, the men were called, one by one, for examination. They left, most of them, with raucous laughs, claps on the back, and promises to meet again "in an hour or two." But dawn came, and the morning passed, and it was not until noon that Jose's name was called. Following one of the Legionnaires who had broken into the house the night before, he was led, limping, up a narrow flight of stairs and into an office, bare of everything save a desk and a chair occupied by a fat, rosy-cheeked colonel.

Jose and his guard stood silent, the Legionnaire at attention, while the colonel fussed through a mass of papers. Finally, he looked up.

"Name?" he asked, tonelessly, of the guard.

"Aldez, *coronel*."

"Aldez . . . Aldez . . . " The colonel glanced down a list. "J. Aldez Ruelda?" he asked, looking up.

"J. Aldez Ruelda," Jose repeated, praying they would never discover his mother's name was "Perales," not "Ruelda."

"You live —?" The officer mechanically repeated his rote, staring beyond Jose.

"Calle San Jeromino, 96." Despite his pounding heart, Jose answered calmly, almost haughtily.

"Who owns your home?"

"My aunt, Señorita Ruelda."

The colonel glanced down, read and nodded to himself. Suddenly he shot up his head.

"What have you been doing all this time inside the Communist lines?" he snapped.

Jose steeled himself.

"I haven't been 'all this time' inside the Communist lines," he replied quietly. "I have only recently returned from Burgos — where I was on . . . business." He paused significantly. "I had a time getting through," he added with a smile.

At the mention of the rebel capital, the colonel whistled softly. For the first time, he seemed really to see Jose.

"From Burgos," he repeated slowly. He started to speak, then half rose and peered over his desk.

"What are you leaning on the desk like that for?" he asked. "Are you hurt?"

Jose repeated his story of the fight with the "escaping Communist." The colonel glanced at the mercenary who nodded. For a moment he thoughtfully tapped a pencil on his desk.

"I'll turn you over to one of your own people," he said, at last, shortly. "He'd have to talk to you, anyhow, and he'll see that your wound's dressed." He turned to the guard. "Get that Basque lieutenant in the next room," he commanded.

The guard saluted, turned, and strode into the adjoining room. Jose looked toward the door, waiting, and a moment later he was clenching his fists, tight, at his side.

The guard had opened the door again, saluting. And preceding him, a sprucely dressed young rebel officer stepped into the room — Rafael Aznar.

13.

RAFAEL came to a smart salute.

"*Mi coronel?*" he asked. Then, his eyes shifting, his mouth opened in amazement. "Jose Aldez!" he exclaimed. His right hand automatically slipped to the gun at his side.

"Hello, Rafael," Jose said quietly. He saw the look of amazement pass from Rafael's face, and one of amusement replace it.

"So, my good friend," Rafael drawled, "you now find yourself in the camp of the Nationalists?"

"I do," Jose replied. "In fact, I have been for a good while now."

"Señor Aldez just returned from Burgos," the colonel explained shortly. "You know each other?"

The smile left Rafael's face. A light of hate shone in his eyes.

"Know him?" he snarled. "He's a Communist, one of the most active in our village! He broke jail and skipped town after he burned down our church, *coronel!*"

The colonel gazed at Rafael a moment. Then, slowly, his head turned to Jose. His pudgy face was set now. His little eyes hard.

"Is that true?" he demanded.

Jose's heart beat fast. With all his will, he kept his body without tenseness, at ease.

"It is not true," he replied. "I never was a Communist. I never burned down our church." He faced the colonel squarely, while the latter watched him with unfriendly eyes. "I used to belong to a sort of Republican group called the *Liga de la Juventud*," he explained. "I didn't know what it was all about then," he added with a shrug. "Then one night they set fire to the church —"

"*They* did," sneered Rafael.

Jose turned wide eyes to him.

"Wasn't it the Communists?" he asked.

"It certainly was!" Rafael snapped. "And you led the gang!"

Jose shook his head. He turned back to the colonel.

"They let me take the blame for it," he went on, "when I didn't even know about it. Naturally everybody was furious, and they threw me in jail, but I escaped. I escaped," he repeated, raising his voice dramatically, "because I swore that some day, and some day soon, I was going to pay back the skunks who burned that church and let me take the blame for it!"

Rafael stepped forward.

"That's a lie!" he cried, his eyes blazing. He swung to the colonel. "He's a damned Communist liar, *coronel!*" he declared. "He led his gang of Communists while we were pals, and he sneaked Dolor —" His mouth clamped shut. His face white, he stood stiff a moment, composing himself. "The whole village knows he burned the church," he said shortly.

At the inadvertent mention of Dolores, a tiny smile flickered on the colonel's fat lips. But when he turned back to Jose, there was no smile there.

"The lieutenant's word is sufficient," he said, coldly. "Unless you can produce evidence to show you're what you say you are —" He stopped, with a gesture. It was a small gesture but Jose could see a firing squad at the end of it. He glanced at Rafael, who was smiling widely now.

For a second, Jose hesitated, shifting his foot as the pain became almost unbearable. Then, slowly, he reached his hand into the pocket of his cousin's coat that he wore, drew out a paper he had found in Juan's chest, unfolded it, and passed it to the colonel.

Without realizing it, he was holding his breath while the colonel, with Rafael standing behind him, looked at the slip: credentials from General Headquarters at Burgos, for J. Aldez Ruelda, of Calle San Jeromino, 96, San Sebastian. After a moment, he looked up, and Jose immediately breathed more easily. The credentials, he could see, were legitimate.

"Then that's all there is to that," said the colonel, handing the slip back.

But Rafael sprang forward.

"It's a lie!" he snarled. "It's a counterfeit! It doesn't belong to him!"

"Well, which is your accusation?" asked the colonel calmly. "Pick one and stick to it."

Rafael's eyes were aflame again.

"It doesn't belong to him!" he shouted. "He stole it! I don't know if his mother's name is Ruelda, but he never lived in the Calle San Jeromino in San Sebastian!"

"I've lived there since I left Morino," Jose replied, quietly. He turned to the motionless mercenary beside him. "Is not Señorita Ruelda my aunt?" he asked.

The guard drew himself up to attention.

"I heard the lady cry 'my nephew,' *coronel*," he reported stiffly, "and she threw her arms around the Señor. I also heard her say the man the Señor shot was a — well, a 'Loyalist,' she called him," he finished apologetically.

The colonel nodded, shortly.

"Enough," he said. "We've wasted too much time as it is." He turned to Rafael. "I don't question your intentions," he said, "but it looks as though you've let prejudice get the better of you. There was a hint —" here, once more, a smile puckered his fat lips — "of a young lady in the situation. Many boys," he went on, pontifically, "thought they were radicals, but have proven good, obedient Nationalists when the trouble came. You, yourself, you say, were a pal of Aldez when he was what you call a Communist." He paused, drumming on the desk. "As to this church burning," he went on slowly, "I have known of similar — er — errors in identification. In fact," he added, gazing at the ceiling, "some of the good, obedient Nationalists I mentioned became such as a result of that form of — er — Communist terrorism." He turned sharply to Rafael again. "You will not let your personal sentiments again interfere with your duties as a Nationalist officer," he stated to the tight-lipped young man. "Now take Señor Aldez, see that his wounded leg is well treated, and afterward he will return to me here!"

Rafael snapped to attention and saluted. He motioned to Jose with a jerk of his head, and led him to the adjoining office, where, with crisp orders, he directed a young adjutant to take him to the first-aid quarters at the other end of the building. As Jose followed the young man to the door, he could feel the eyes of his former friend burning with hate on his back.

A male nurse hastily bandaged his leg in the crowded, stinking ward, meanwhile muttering to himself about the filthy jobs given to a man who was sacrificing everything for his King. And afterward Jose limped up the stairs and along the dreary corridor of the old administration building, to the colonel's office. His limp was particularly noticeable as he entered the little room.

The colonel, pen in hand, nodded to a chair, and watched him cross to it.

"Badly hurt?" he asked.

"Bad enough to keep me from going far the next week or two, *coronel*," Jose lied, with a smile.

The colonel tapped the desk thoughtfully with his pen.

"What sort of work were you doing here for General Headquarters?" he suddenly demanded.

Jose's heart missed a beat.

"Gathering information," he replied cryptically, and with as much ease as he could muster.

"What sort of information?"

"That," Jose answered, coldly "is for General Headquarters."

The colonel's eyes narrowed. Jose saw the color rise to his already glowing cheeks.

"We have the proper authorities here to whom to turn over your information," he snapped. "That will be attended to." He drew a slip of paper from his desk and scribbled a few words on it. "You will stay, for the present, at your home in the Calle San Jeromino," he ordered, handing Jose the paper. "This pass is good for the immediate neighborhood only. You will report here tomorrow at ten o'clock."

Jose saluted and turned away.

"Oh, and Aldez!"

Jose turned back. The colonel's lips were set.

"I will hold your Burgos credentials for the time being." He held out his hand.

Jose drew back.

"But, *coronel*, General Headquarters —"

The colonel's fist crashed on the desk.

"I'm in command here!" he roared. "I'll take full responsibility!"

Jose saluted again, drew his cousin's paper from his pocket, and with sinking heart, passed it over. He saw the colonel place it carefully in his desk drawer. As he turned and left the room, he knew the officer's eyes were following him closely.

The days that immediately followed were nightmare days for Jose. He spent as little time as possible in the streets that were filled with troops, who swaggered about as if they owned the town. He tried not to hear the tales of atrocities, stories of rape and murder, about which the soldiers shouted loudly at street corners and in cafés. Once anger got the better of him, with almost disastrous results.

He was passing an open café, where a squat young Legionnaire boasted of his part in the Moorish slaughter of the wounded in hospitals after the capture of Cáceres. His companion leaned forward to listen, breathing heavily.

"We poured oil on them, head to foot." The excited man made quick, broken gestures. "Head to foot — foot to head!" he cried. "Then —" he pulled a match from his pocket, struck it, and ran it back and forth, the length of the table. Jose stopped and whirled around.

"*Coño!*" he cried. He drew back and crashed his open palm against the man's face, toppling him off his chair.

Immediately the café was in an uproar. Jose was surrounded by menacing Legionnaires. A burly major of the regulars shoved his way through the crowd.

"What's the matter here?" he growled.

The excited soldiers all tried to explain at once, while Jose stood, silent, contemptuous, and outwardly calm. When finally the major understood, he snapped around to Jose, jutting out his jaw.

"Is that your reason for attacking a Nationalist soldier — because he destroyed the enemy?" he roared.

Jose looked him up and down.

"I can hear you without shouting," he replied evenly, and added: "In Burgos, where I just came from, General Headquarters has different ideas on how to win over the enemy troops we capture."

As the major started to speak, Jose drew a pencil and paper from his pocket.

"What's your name?" he demanded shortly. "Mine," he added carelessly, is "Aldez. Intelligence." He looked up, the pencil poised.

The major returned his gaze a moment, flushing, then he dropped his eyes.

"I've got nothing to do with these animals," he muttered, jerking his head toward the Legionnaire.

Jose hesitated.

"That's true," he finally agreed. He slipped the pencil and paper back in his pocket and turned to the glowering Legionnaire who was rubbing his cheek. "You!" he snapped. "Change your tactics, if you don't want to end up against a wall! And that," he said, taking in the now silent group with a sweep of his hand, "goes for all of you!" And he walked off, his head high, but his heart beating rapidly.

Now he knew he was in greater danger than ever. Something must be done, and done soon. Luckily, he had discovered from Señorita Ruelda, on one of the rare occasions he had seen her after Juan's body had been carted away, that his cousin, from his tenth year, had

gone to school in Madrid, spending his summers in the Andalusian mountains with other relatives, and returning to San Sebastian only with the beginning of the invasion. Juan was, therefore, practically unknown in the neighborhood. But that, he knew, would not protect him for long.

Finally, underlying his sense of immediate danger, was an impatience to get back into action. If only he could join an advance into his terror-ridden country around Morino, to show his people who the real savages and terrorists were! What was happening in Morino now? he asked himself as he tossed, hot and impatient, in Juan's bed at night. Was Father Pedro still alive? Would he ever be well enough to help Jose? *What was happening to Dolores?* And then, with that question, he would close his eyes, lying very still, and he would see her again as she drew his head down and kissed his wet eyes, hear her again as she whispered: "I love you, Jose."

It was on the morning following the incident at the café, that Rafael again spoke to him. Jose had spent most of his time in Colonel Leon's office, making himself useful in small ways, constantly expressing amazement at the officer's cleverness and soldierly bearing, listening with admiring eyes and revolting stomach to tales of savagery and the fat man's heroism. Colonel Leon, while waiting for the routine verification of the Burgos credentials, was beginning to approve heartily of Jose, even doling him out a few pesetas daily for lunch and incidentals; and though — as Jose was soon to learn — he had the young man under constant surveillance, he decided anybody so appreciative must be the right sort. Rafael, however, never appeared aware of his old friend. When business called him in the colonel's office, he would wait at attention, eyes front, face set.

And then, on the fourth morning, he came striding in, followed by a young civilian. For the first time in San Sebastian, Jose saw a pleasant smile on his face.

"Colonel Leon," he said, as he saluted, "this is Señor Gonzales, reporter and photographer of *El Sol*. He wants to write a story and take pictures of the people who, as he puts it —" Rafael shrugged and laughed, "are doing such splendid work in reconstruction and rehabilitation in San Sebastian."

Colonel Leon jumped to his feet. His cheeks glowed more rosily than ever, and he held out a pudgy hand. The reporter, a myopic young skeleton, peered forward through thick-lensed glasses for a

moment, then suddenly bounced across the floor, took the extended hand, and pumped it. Rafael cut short his effusive stuttered greeting.

"Now," he said, bustling about, "the picture first. You sit behind your desk, *coronel* —" Rafael gently forced the officer back, placed a large sheaf of papers before him, and handed him a pen. "I will stand behind your desk on your right, while Aldez —" he waved a condescending hand toward Jose, "he will stand at your left."

Jose jumped aside.

"Me?" he exclaimed. "No, no! I — I —"

"Come!" Rafael's voice was sharp. "You're working here, even though you're not officially on the staff, aren't you?"

"Why," murmured Jose, "I may have helped out some, but —"

"Then?" said Rafael, "no false modesty . . . among friends," he added, in slow, even tones.

"No, no," beamed the colonel, "no false modesty among friends!"

Jose saw Rafael watching him with steady, expressionless eyes. With a little shrug, he stepped over beside the colonel, and stood patiently, while the reporter-photographer settled his camera, then settled their faces. After the picture was snapped, he mumbled excuses, which the colonel, in his anxiety to be interviewed, scarcely heard. He left the office and limped down the stairs to the street.

His leg was practically healed now, but he still limped. It was reassuring to the colonel, who probably considered him helpless, if he bothered to worry about him at all now. As a matter of fact, Jose told himself, as he moved slowly along the crowded sidewalk, he *was* helpless. With Juan's pass gone, there was no chance of his being able to get through the Fascist lines, while every hour brought closer the showdown he knew must come. And now Rafael's new friendliness made him even more uneasy. He turned into a small café, dropped in a chair by a corner table, and ordered a glass of wine. It was an hour later, when he was finishing a light lunch, that he heard his name whispered.

He looked up quickly. The man who shortly before had taken the seat opposite him, was leaning over his plate, busily chewing. Now he raised his head and, still eating, gazed absently at a picture on the wall behind Jose. Jose stared at him, then started.

Despite the white hair and the general appearance of old age on the man's face, Jose recognized Pablo, a young worker active in local organization, whom he had met several times in the lines. Jose looked

down, cut a hunk of cheese, and stuck it in his mouth, along with a bite of bread.

"What are you doing in San Sebastian?" he asked, low.

"What are *you* doing here?" the other asked as he chewed, still gazing at the picture. "That's more to the point."

Jose quickly explained, and learned that his companion had stayed voluntarily behind to continue his work.

"But you," Pablo went on, leaning over to cut his meat, "you ought to get out of here, and get out quick, or your life isn't worth — that!" And without looking up, he drew the sharp end of his knife across his fork.

"I know," muttered Jose, biting at his cheese. "I'm not staying out of love of Colonel Leon's pink cheeks."

"And right now," Pablo said to his plate, "men are needed in the lines more than ever before. Do you know," he glanced up for a moment, speaking quietly, "they are planning a drive almost immediately on Bilbao?" He didn't hear Jose's startled exclamation as he looked down again at his plate. "They are taking advantage of a terroristic campaign in a bunch of villages along the route, centering in a village called Morino," he continued. "They've dug in deep in that neighborhood, how deep, I don't know. Maybe enough to make their advance unimpeded."

Jose laughed bitterly.

"I know that — too well," he said.

Pablo did not look up.

"You come from that country?" he asked.

Jose drew a deep breath.

"Come from there?" he repeated. "I'm supposed to be the leader of the terrorist gang!"

Pablo looked up quickly; gazed at Jose a full second. Then he lowered his eyes and went on eating silently until he finished his meal. At last he pushed his plate away.

"Can you come to me tonight?" he asked. "A group of us," he added.

"Where?"

Pablo gave him an address on a side street of the poorer section of the city, all the time wiping his mouth with his napkin.

"At ten o'clock," he said.

He stood up while the waitress wrote out his check. He started for

the door, then turned back, shoving his hand in his pocket. He stood by the table, his back to the restaurant.

"You know, you're being followed?" he asked. As Jose started, he laid a fifty céntimo piece on the table. "Young fellow in a gray suit, sitting next the cashier's desk. No —" as Jose instinctively looked up the restaurant, "you probably don't know him; aren't intended to. He's been following you some time." He slapped his soft hat on his head. "So have I," he added, with a grin, as he turned and walked up the aisle.

Rafael, in his office, removed the telephone from the hook.

"Hello," he said.

"This is Gonzales speaking," came the voice. "The negative came out all right."

"Good. Can you make a print with just —" Rafael cupped his hand over the mouthpiece, "— just that other fellow's picture on it? And get it up right away? It's going by plane to Burgos this afternoon, and I'm hoping for a reply first thing in the morning."

14.

THE church at Morino had been completely demolished, but one of the bells that crashed to the ground when the belfry caved in, was uncracked. And now, set on a wooden brace above the square, it peeled gleefully and violently.

"*Mola's troops have taken San Sebastian! The Legionnaires and Moors are swarming through the city's streets! Arriba España! Viva Franco!*"

By the open altar at the head of the square, little Mayor Nardiz scooted back and forth along the platform, proclaiming the news. Father Mario, his eyes still haunted, knelt in loud prayer, and then, pulling himself to his feet, offered the personal congratulations of God to the absent troops. The crowd, for the most part, listened in silence. Some of the elder people dutifully crossed themselves; most of the younger men and women listened glumly or uneasily. And as the days passed, the glories of the Fascists, the terrors of the Republic, were hammered into them without cessation.

"The advance of Satan has been halted!" the priest and village fathers thundered constantly. The plans to destroy *all* churches in Spain, to murder *all* priests and ravage nuns — plans that were first carried out *here* —" and always a finger would rise to point at the mass of forlorn wreckage on the highway above, " — they have been thwarted by our brave crusaders!" Farms, some of which had mysteriously gone up in flames throughout the countryside, were no longer in danger. No longer must the peasant fear the "enslaving yoke of Communism," which would work him like an ox, and then leave him nothing to show for his labor.

And as this constant barrage poured down on the bewildered peasants and workers, threats and even rough usage kept Dolores and her few clear-headed friends from making open reply. More and more the Fascist speakers were darkly coupling her name with the "terrorists" who, like evil spirits, seemed to be hovering in the wilderness beyond the villages; and the hate and menace grew about her, like a tangible thing, until it took courage for her to appear at all in the square during these meetings.

Yet for two afternoons after the occupation of San Sebastian, she stood near an alley at the foot of the square and listened to the fervent harangues of the village notables. And, at last, on the third day, remembering a remark of Luis Danillo's, she suddenly crossed over to the little open air café, and picked up one of the chairs.

Father Mario was just then exhorting the crowd. With the mention of Jose's name, he had worked himself into a rage, and was detailing the tortures that awaited Jose in the hereafter.

"But we won't wait for that!" he shouted, shaking a menacing finger at the crowd. "We won't put it all on the shoulders of the Lord! When we capture that bandit . . . " His voice died away, his hand sank to his side, while he stared openmouthed down the square.

The crowd turned to follow his eyes. Dolores was standing on a chair behind them, gazing at Father Mario.

A murmur rose; died down. Dolores spoke.

"Friends!" she called. "Are you going to let these people fool you? Why should Jose Aldez steal in and burn that church? To make you people hate the Loyalists — his side?" She glanced up at the platform. The four or five astonished people there had come to life. She turned back to the gaping crowd. "*You* know Aldez didn't set the fire!" she cried, quickly. "Those men on the platform know he didn't. *Father Mario knows he didn't!*"

She looked up. Mayor Nardiz was squatting at the edge of the platform, talking excitedly to a small group of men. She saw the men turn and start through the crowd. "Father Mario!" she called, over the heads of the waiting crowd. "One question!"

At the other end of the square, the priest drew himself up.

"You, a woman, dare ask a question of a priest at his altar?" He flung out his arm to the simple altar behind him. "But," he thundered, "if you are asking why I stand on this crude platform, instead of in my beautiful church, the church our ancestors built with the sweat —"

"*No!*" Dolores' cry, the sweep of her arm, stopped the priest. He stared at her in amazement. "I'm asking why you're standing by that altar alone!" She glanced down at the file of men, shoving their way through the astonished crowd toward her, and then looked up at the priest again. "I'm asking," she called out distinctly, "*where is Father Pedro?*"

There was an immediate tension in the crowd. Despite official assurances, the disappearance of their beloved leader had caused a vague uneasiness; it seemed, somehow, deep in their minds, connected with the dark and uncertain times. A moment later, however, there was an uproar, as the foremost of the file of men lunged toward

Dolores — only to sprawl on his face as Luis Danillo slipped his foot between the man's legs.

There were shouts, menacing fists, while several of Dolores' friends crowded protectively around her. Father Mario, glad of the distraction, held up his hand.

"Let no one touch the girl!" he thundered, when at last he could be heard, "even though she casts aspersions on God's Church, and —" there was a catch in his voice, "one of his old and holiest servants, who is unable now to minister to you." He hurriedly blessed the quieted but uncertain crowd. "Now," he ordered, sharply, "disperse, immediately!"

But Dolores knew she was a marked person. She had implanted a question in the minds of the uneasy throng; but those in power, who already hated her, now considered her dangerous. She decided to stay always by her friends in the daytime, remain indoors at night, and never go beyond the confines of the village. And then, three days later, when Luis Danillo came to her with further news from the villa of the Marquesa de Valera, she forgot her caution.

It was Luis who had told her that he suspected Father Pedro was imprisoned somewhere in the villa. An indiscreet remark of the servant, Carlos, led him to think so. Luis, who worked on the estate, where his father and grandfather had worked before him, was a lanky, awkward young man, with a simple, freckled face, considered by many — including his employer — simpler than he actually was.

"What do they want to imprison him for?" he had demanded of Dolores. "What did the old man do to them?"

For a moment Dolores was puzzled. Then she grasped his arm.

"Do you think, Luis," she said excitedly, "it might have to do with the war? The marquesa is a Fascist, so —" All at once her eyes were shining. "Listen, Luis!" she cried, "he was 'taken sick' they said, just at the time of the fire! Luis! Father Pedro knows something about that fire!"

Now, three days after her speech, she saw him running across the square toward her. She glanced at a couple talking quietly nearby.

"Laugh," she said, in a low voice, when he stopped, panting, before her. "You have something funny to tell me."

Luis stared at her, then glanced at the men, and nodded.

"It's not so funny," he replied, equally low. "It's about Father

Pedro. I've been trying to find out, like you asked, what I could about him. They're taking him to Burgos early tomorrow morning!"

Dolores caught her breath.

"I heard Carlos and the marquesa talking," Luis continued. "They know I'm with you, but they don't think much about it, because they figure I'm simple." He shrugged and grinned. "Maybe I am. Anyhow, they were talking in French. They don't remember my mother was French Basque, and I never bother to remind them. But the marquesa was saying she didn't want to keep Father Pedro around, after — after — well, she said something, meaning you," he went on, hurriedly, lowering his eyes, "after you talked to the crowd like you did."

"That means," said Dolores slowly, "Father Pedro *does* know too much about the fire, and is on our side, too . . . They're taking him away," she went on, more to herself than to Luis "and he's the only one who can tell the truth — show the people who really are the terrorists . . . " She looked down at the hard-packed ground, glowing in the sun. Then she threw back her head. "Luis," she said, "I've got to see Father Pedro!"

Luis' mouth fell open.

"And how?" he demanded.

"I'm going out to the villa to ask the marquesa — *make* her show him to me!"

Luis' head was shaking incredulously.

"You're crazy!" he declared. "With half a dozen servants ready to throw you in with the priest?"

Dolores brushed aside his objection.

"I don't think she'd dare," she answered. "*You'll* know I'm there, and I can tell her a lot of others knew I went. Besides, I've got a gun. I've *got* to see Father Pedro!" she exclaimed, her voice rising. "I don't know how, but I've *got* to, before it's too late!" She glanced around quickly, then lowered her voice. "Will you wait for me fifteen minutes up on the road?" she asked.

The Marquesa de Valera immediately knew that the dusty-haired girl standing at her door (the shocked Carlos refused to let her enter) was a Loyalist. Loyalist girls only wore blue dungarees. More than that, looking at the delicate, intelligent face, the large, grave eyes, the marquesa felt equally sure that this girl was the most active remaining

enemy of the Fascists in the village of Morino: Dolores Gracia. She thought, "Can she possibly know about the priest?"

She smiled pleasantly.

"Won't you come in?" she asked.

Dolores hesitated, then stepped inside. She followed the marquesa, past the scowling Carlos, to a little room in the rear of the villa, heavy with the scent of the brilliant-colored shrubbery that rose beyond the open French windows. The marquesa motioned her to a seat, and sat down on the divan opposite.

There was a moment's silence, in which the unaccustomed splendor of the room bore down on Dolores uncomfortably. She lowered her eyes, then quickly raised them.

"I have come, Señora Marquesa —" she began.

But the marquesa was holding out a little silver cigarette case.

"You smoke?" she asked, politely.

Dolores shook her head abruptly. She was unprepared for this reception.

"You seem to have made some mistake, Señora Marquesa," she said, "my name is —"

"Dolores Gracia, *verdad?*" The Marquesa de Valera smiled at the astonished girl, as she touched a match to her cigarette. "You see," she said pleasantly, "you are already famous." As she saw Dolores flush, and realized how delicately beautiful she was, a memory of a rumor flashed across her mind. "You are, are you not, a dear friend of a young man I once met? One — Aznar, I believe he is called?" Her eyes were hard, though she still smiled.

Dolores flushed again, but now her own eyes narrowed.

"Rafael and I were, perhaps, friends once," she replied in a low voice, "but now I would as soon be friendly with — with Franco!"

The marquesa nodded graciously, though her lips tightened.

"I, too, would enjoy the honor, señorita." In a moment, however, her smile returned. "But, now," she said lightly, "I have a more immediate honor. You have come, señorita —?"

"I have come, Señora Marquesa —" Dolores' reply was almost gruff, as she fought back the influence of the pretty face and pretty words, the woman's charming clothes and surroundings, "I have come to see Father Pedro. I know he is here," she added quickly, looking into the other woman's eyes, "and I must see him."

The marquesa showed neither surprise nor anger.

"I see you have been talking to our own little Communist boy, Luis Danillo," she said with a smile. "He is a nice boy, our Luis," she added, "only, maybe —" she tapped her head.

"I don't know anything about Luis Danillo's head," Dolores replied without smiling. "I would like to see Father Pedro."

The marquesa was grave. "And you believe Father Pedro is here?"

"I *know* he's here," Dolores lied.

The marquesa was silent for some time. Noiselessly, she tapped her foot, gazing down at the cigarette that moved slowly to and from her lips. Suddenly she raised her head.

"I think I hear the telephone," she murmured. She stood up.

Dolores watched the marquesa leave the room, listened to her step die away in the hall. Never having heard a telephone bell, she was not wondering why she did not hear one now, but she was becoming more uneasy. She stood up, then walked to the French window.

It was all so different from the way she had pictured it, jaunting along the road in Luis' donkey cart, while Luis promised to be always nearby in case of need. Now she was in the enemy's house — and received as a welcome guest! Her hand touched the pocket of her dungarees, where her little pistol lay, and then dropped to her side. She shrugged her shoulders. There wasn't much danger of her having to shoot anybody, she thought. In fact, she was convinced the Marquesa de Valera would not dare to try to harm her here; it could only hurt the Fascists' cause.

A cool breeze crossed the garden, bringing the rich flower scents, and freshening her cheeks.

Many of the flowers were strange to her, but she picked out the ones she knew: gardenias, jasmine, roses, with towering purple-flowered magnolias. She breathed deeply of the perfume, as if with each breath she could store up a memory for the future. "But maybe, soon," she thought, "places like this will belong to us." A little smile appeared at the corner of her lips . . . and then faded.

How long had it been since the marquesa had left her? She turned.

The marquesa was standing, motionless, in the doorway. Now she stepped forward, smiling.

"You like my little garden, *verdad?*" she asked. "*C'est chic, n'est-ce pas?*" Then, without waiting for an answer, she went on, soberly: "About the good father." She sank on the divan, tapping her foot thoughtfully. Then she looked up. "He really is here, you know,"

she said, confidingly. "But since the poor man has not been able to see anybody, we have kept it a secret." She shook her head, with a sad smile of sympathy. "And you really must see him?" she asked.

"I must see him," Dolores replied. The marquesa rose.

"Then come," she said, starting for the door.

Dolores followed, her heart pounding. At the door, however, the marquesa suddenly turned.

"But you can't see a priest in those!" she exclaimed, pointing to Dolores' dungarees. "How long since you've been to Mass, child, that you didn't know that?"

Dolores felt herself redden. Of course she should have remembered that, by church law, no priest could see her in this costume. But the marquesa patted her on the shoulder.

"Come," she said, "I'll take you to my room and give you something more suitable." She took her by the hand and led her across the thickly-carpeted hall and up the staircase with delicately-wrought iron balustrade, to the second floor.

As they walked along the dim-lit corridor, Dolores became increasingly reluctant. But the marquesa still held her hand, and at last turned into a bedroom, more luxurious, it seemed to Dolores, than the chambers of princesses she used to see in the weekly films at the village hall. The marquesa stepped to the bed and picked up a robe already lying on it. "Here," she said, "slip this on."

It was a blue silk negligee, lighter to the touch than Dolores had imagined possible. She started to put it on, but the marquesa stopped her, with a laugh.

"And have the legs of your — your *things*," she said, pointing, "showing underneath?" She laughed again, gaily. "Come!" she insisted. "*That* ornament must be taken off."

"But a priest would surely object to this alone!" Dolores protested.

The marquesa shook her head.

"Not in the home," she assured her, "and — " with a graceful gesture, "— you are my guest." As Dolores still hesitated, she smiled, rather patronizingly.

"My dear señorita," she said, "I'm afraid you don't know the ways of — shall I say, 'the world?' I hope," she went on soberly, "I am a good daughter of Mother Church, but I can assure you that, in *our* world, at least, the holy fathers are not sticklers, except in the case of out and out rules. Pants on ladies are —" she swept out her hand,

"*verboten*. On the other hand, there is no yardstick as to the cut in the back of a lady's robe." Her fingers closing gently on Dolores' wrist, she drew her toward the dressing room. "Here, *Señorita Modestia*," she said, closing the door gently behind her.

Reluctantly, Dolores drew off her dungarees, which, since they reached nearly to her neck, were almost her only clothes, all the time seeking a reason for the marquesa's graciousness to her, a worker, and an enemy. And when she slipped on the negligee, she also thrust her little pistol in its pocket. Then she pulled the robe close about her, tied the cord, and looked in the long mirror. She stood staring at herself.

Although she had seen such robes in the films, she had never thought of one day wearing one so beautiful. She twisted around to look at the back . . . and she began to smile.

Never having owned more than a small, blurred mirror, it was the first time she realized she had a beautiful back. The picture of an American actress crossed her mind as she looked at it. Then, turning front, she looked at her small firm breasts, accentuated by the silk. She smoothed the robe and tightened the cord.

"If the priests can see *them* dressed this way," she thought, defiantly, "they can see *us* this way, too!"

Her disheveled hair disturbed her, and picking up a comb, she rearranged it as hastily as possible. She had a feeling of guilt, but she picked up a towel and wiped her dusty face. Lotions and cosmetics were lying on the dresser but she didn't know the use of most of them. Some day, perhaps, she might have things like these! She reached toward a lipstick, and stopped.

"What am I doing?" she asked herself.

She thought of her people being killed at the front by the thousands, of Jose, possibly lying dead or dying, of the menace of an attack always hanging over her own province — and she was dreaming of making up her face like one of *them!* Besides, the very fact the marquesa wanted her to wear this outfit should make her refuse! She drew back her hand.

"And why not, *mi vida?*"

Dolores spun around. The marquesa stood smiling in the doorway. She looked Dolores over, admiringly.

"You are lovely!" she cried. Suddenly the delicate beauty of the girl warned her. Surely, she thought, I cannot harm this child! Her eyes filled, and she crossed to Dolores. "You are lovely!" she re-

peated, "but perhaps it would be better not —" she stopped and patted the girl's cheeks.

Dolores had been watching in astonishment. There was no doubting that warm look, the sincerity of those wet eyes. *Lovely* is how she would have described this exquisite woman, she thought.

"— better not put those things on my face, you mean, Señora Marquesa?" she finished shyly. "But I wasn't going to."

Already the marquesa was thinking: Beauty like hers will urge the peasants on to drag us down into their filth. She drew back smiling.

"Yes, child. I was going to say it would be best to see your priest without cosmetics," she lied. "Anyhow, nothing could make your face more charming. Now, come!"

But Dolores hesitated.

"And you couldn't lend me something a little more — more respectable?" she asked, timidly.

It was hard, now, for the marquesa to keep the smile on her lips.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that's all I can lend you. My things are packed, ready to leave at a moment's notice, in case conditions become worse." She looked at Dolores, thoughtfully. "Is it because you are afraid a priest might feel that such clothes on one of the — the people —"

"I'm ready, Señora Marquesa," Dolores broke in sharply.

The marquesa nodded. "Then follow me, please."

Halfway down the stairs, Dolores cried out. At the foot stood Luis, twisting his beret in embarrassment. His hands dropped, and his mouth fell open, when he saw Dolores' costume. Flushing, the girl pulled the robe about her throat. It was the marquesa who first spoke.

"I was afraid you might feel uneasy," she said, "so I have appointed your young — Communist, is it?" she laughed pleasantly, "— friend as guide." While the boy and girl silently followed, she led the way across the hall to the iron door.

Here she held out a large key to Luis.

"You may take the key, Luis," she said. "Down the stairs and along the corridor. You can't miss it." With a nod, she turned away.

Clumsily, Luis fitted the key in the lock, turned and pulled. The iron door creaked open. He lit a candle the marquesa had given him, jerked his head over his shoulder to Dolores, and started down the winding stone stairway. Holding her robe carefully about her, Dolores followed.

15.

FATHER PEDRO dropped his beads into his pocket and pulled himself up from his knees. They were long minutes before he sank back on his wooden stool. But once settled, breathing with difficulty, he smiled into the blackness before him.

Never had he known such peace as in these days (or was it months, or even longer?) of his confinement. A quiet ecstasy, a sense of disassociation from his body constantly grew on him. Father Pedro was no fool. He knew his self-restricted diet of dry bread and water helped create this sense, but whatever its cause, it brought the bliss for which he had so longed; and what more could he ask? Only occasionally did uneasiness sweep over him.

He instinctively knew — though nothing was ever told him — that momentous events were happening in the world outside. And at times he felt guilty of clinging to this retreat when perhaps he should do all possible to obtain his freedom and fight for his people. And at such times he would pray, pleading his long years of service, his old age and weakness.

Today, however, he had no such qualms when the Marquesa de Valera hurried down to tell of the coming of visitors, his first. It was she who had heard his last words — when he took an oath never again to speak until either he was before his ecclesiastical superiors, or before the young man who was victim of the plot he had overheard. And when the woman told him he was to be visited by the *novia* of Father Mario's nephew, Aznar, along with one of her own workmen, Father Pedro — as the marquesa had realized — felt no doubt that he would keep his vow.

He could hear, now, the creak of the distant iron door, and in a minute he heard them descending the long, circular stairway. Soon came the dim glow of the candlelight, against which he had to squint. He held them shut a moment, even after he knew the couple was standing before his cell door, breathing heavily with exertion or excitement. When, at last, he was able to see, he did not recognize in Dolores one of his parishioners of long ago. He saw only a girl dressed, to him, in shocking fashion, and he set his thin lips more firmly.

As Dolores had descended the narrow staircase, she felt the stone walls converge and press down on her, and she followed Luis, with one hand clutching his shoulder. At the head of the passage she was only dimly aware of an open cell, empty, but with an iron bedstead

covered with tumbled blankets, while a half burned candle dripped beside it. She was half aware, too, of the damp walls, the slow-dripping ceiling; but it was when she stood before the wraithlike priest in the shadow of his cell that she fully felt the horror of the place.

She stood, hand pressed against her breast, unable, at first, to speak, fascinated by the bright eyes that watched her from the darkness.

"Father—" she began hesitantly. "Father . . . we have come . . ." Suddenly she grasped the bars with both hands. "Father!" she cried. "Tell us — *por el amor de Dios* — only you can — *who burned the church in Morino?*"

The eyes only stared at her. They weren't human eyes, she thought. Not animal eyes — they were kindly; but not human. She drew closer to the bars.

"Listen, Father," she hurried on, "you must tell us! For the sake of the people you loved, you must tell us! We're both Loyalists —" she saw his puzzled expression. The term was strange. "We are fighting for the people," she explained quickly, "but some of them are being told lies. They think *we* burned the church, they've been told their own side are all murderers and wicked, and that God's against them. And they've got to be told the truth, now!" She clenched the bars until her hands were white.

She told him how the Legionnaires had captured San Sebastian and intended to destroy the republic. She told him tales of horror that had come from sections already in their hands, and what must happen to his beloved village if they were not stopped — if the people, *all* the people, could not be rallied right away. But still he did not answer. The strange eyes looked at her with sorrow, and once they lit up and his lips parted, as if he were about to speak.

That was when she mentioned the name Jose Aldez as her friend. She stopped as she saw the change, and waited, hopefully.

But the old eyes swept the length of her robe; moved beyond her to the young employee of the Marquesa de Valera who stood uneasily in the background, and his lips closed firmly again. Dolores' head dropped to her arm.

"He would speak to Jose," she murmured. "If Jose could only come! If he'd only come before it's too late!"

Luis stepped up and diffidently patted her shoulder. Behind the bars the old man's eyes were cold now. He would not, he told himself, be taken in by any emotional plot. Dolores jerked up her head.

From above she could hear faintly the rasp of the opening iron door. She could just make out voices — a woman's and several men's. She listened, clutching the bars. Then, eyes wide with fear, she swung around to Luis.

"They're coming after us," she whispered. "And I thought she wouldn't dare!"

Luis stared at her.

"But — but she wouldn't, Dolores!" he whispered back. "I've got a gun, and — and they wouldn't dare! The whole village would know!"

And now Dolores laughed a low bitter laugh.

"Yes, the whole village will know," she said. "Oh, what a little country fool I am!"

For now the truth flashed on her: the marquesa, taking advantage of church laws, had inveigled her into wearing this costume, and now was bringing down witnesses, who would see her — a Spanish girl, who should scarcely be seen speaking to a man — alone here with Luis! She suddenly remembered the open bed up the corridor, apparently just used. This was how *she* was to be discredited with the villagers. Jose was proclaimed a church-burner and murderer; she would be called a prostitute!

She listened, lips tight-pressed, to the distant steps, slowly descending.

"That," she murmured half to herself, "is the way they would get rid of me. But they won't do it," she whispered. "They'll have to kill me — and some of them will go too; or —" She clutched Luis' arm, and laughed again, the same bitter laugh.

Both Father Mario and Nardiz, the Mayor, had been embarrassed when Vieira, the manufacturer, and Marco, the *abogado*, demanded to be taken to the Marquesa de Valera's following the rumor that Father Pedro was being forcibly held in the villa. The manufacturer and the lawyer were upright in character, if a little rotund in person. True, Señor Vieira never objected to shaving a few *céntimos* from his workers' pay, when he was convinced that in the long run it was for their benefit; and the lawyer was willing to defend a friend — or, even, a stranger — in court with his last breath when the virtue of the friend's (or stranger's) case was presented to him in a manner both lucid and lucrative. But neither had actually ever slipped his

hand in another man's pocket, nor missed Mass without cause; and neither would stand by and see a priest maltreated, if he could help it. And so, with misgivings, the priest and the mayor had presented the other two to the marquesa an hour or so earlier.

The marquesa, however, had received the men graciously, and led them to the large drawing room, where, after seating them and ordering wine, she heard the reason for their visit.

"Of course we know, Señora Marquesa, it's just a rumor that Father Pedro is held here." Vieira smiled deprecatingly and shifted his great body. He was uneasy in all this grandeur. "However, considering the unsettled conditions in the village and around . . ." His deep voice trailed away on a thin note, and he made another little gesture.

The marquesa smiled brightly.

"And on what is this rumor founded, señor?" she asked. As she spoke, she silently cursed the church authorities at Burgos for not sending for the old priest sooner. They had been notified the day Dolores made her accusation in the village.

Vieira shifted his feet.

"Well," he commenced, "there is a village girl, one Dolores Gracia —"

"Ah, yes. *Une femme de trottoir, n'est-ce pas* — a girl of the streets?"

The foreign language almost overwhelmed the canner. But he held up a hand in protest.

"No, no, Señora Marquesa!" he exclaimed. "She worked hard for me! She was a good girl — until this trouble . . ."

The tiptoed entrance of a servant broke into his defense. Carlos whispered to the marquesa, who impatiently rose, and with apologies and recommendations to the bottle of old sherry, left the room. Half an hour later, she returned, her eyes bright.

Apologizing again, she refilled the glasses and sat down.

"You were saying, gentlemen?" she began.

"It was about Father Pedro," murmured the lawyer.

"Who, by now, you must be convinced is not here," the mayor exclaimed sharply.

The lawyer muttered apologies; but the marquesa held up her hand.

"Señor Nardiz is mistaken," she said smiling. "Father Pedro *is* here!" She glanced from one face to another. Vieira and Marco

looked astonished, while the mayor and Father Mario tried, by facial contortions, to convey signals to her. But the marquesa regarded them with pleasant calm.

"It is a long story, *messieurs* — do let me give you some wine, Señor Marco!" Once more she filled his glass, pouring a drop in her own. She settled back, ankles crossed, her large eyes turning from one to another with sober earnestness.

Father Pedro, it seemed, had committed a grievous sin. What it was, of course, she, a laywoman, would not know. The old priest, however, was the first to realize it, and confessed it to his superiors. With his own acquiescence, he had been brought here a while earlier, to await transportation to Burgos for his ecclesiastical trial. Father Mario, she added, was naturally bound to make no mention of the affair until after the trial.

"Then this young — er — street girl," said the lawyer, "was right after all."

"I was unfair," replied the marquesa gravely. "I was upset, of course, by interference into the business of the See." She gazed solemnly around. The lawyer and the manufacturer were suddenly uneasy. "The girl, as a matter of fact," the marquesa went on, "is probably very proper. As a matter of fact, I believe she is quite a good friend — the *novia* — of Luis, one of my boys working here." She stood up. "And now you would like to see Father Pedro — if he still can be considered a priest of the Church?"

But the laymen were voluble in protests. They had not known, they explained, that this was an affair of Holy Church Herself. They had no desire to interfere in such solemn matters, to which Father Mario loudly agreed.

"The business of the See, Señora Marquesa," he said pontifically, "is not for lowly people like ourselves to stick our noses into."

The marquesa, however, was already at the door.

"The See," she replied, "will not object, I am sure. It will trust these gentlemen to give out no reports inimical to the Church's business. Unfortunately, though," she added, turning — and now she looked directly at Father Mario, "among other self-imposed penances, Father Pedro has taken an oath not to open his mouth to speak until his trial."

While Father Mario audibly breathed his relief, she found a candle and led the way across the hall to the iron door. Murmuring surprise

at finding it open, she lighted the candle and started the descent of the winding stairway. The men followed.

It was difficult going down, with her high-heeled shoes. She thanked her fortune for not having to descend after Father Pedro's removal — "until," she thought, "we start giving the *canaille* that wants 'its share of the land' their proper share: a good, safe cell!"

And now she smiled inwardly. What she had first considered a misfortune — the fact that Father Pedro's incarceration was no longer a secret — she had been able, she felt, to turn to good account.

"Now, young lady," she thought, as she faintly made out the light near the bottom, "now you have seen your priest, I hope you'll be satisfied. If our lawyer and his friend are as stupid as I think they are, there'll be little else for you to do after this!"

She reached the last few steps and turned to the men.

"Strange," she murmured, "there seem to be others ahead of us."

She reached the corridor and walked along a few steps, then stopped. The men bumped to a halt behind her.

"What's this?" she cried sharply. She turned to look at the cell with the disordered bed and burning candle. Then she hurried on, and the men hurried after her. She came within ten paces of Father Pedro's cell, and stopped again. "What does this mean?" she cried. "What are you doing here — like this?"

Luis and Dolores knelt before the priest's door. For a moment, while the huddled group watched, they did not move. Then Luis rose to his feet and lifted Dolores.

The boy turned to the marquesa. His face was white.

"We have just been married, Señora Marquesa," he said, in a voice that tried to be steady. "Will you be the first to congratulate us?"

Alone in his cell, Father Pedro knelt in the darkness. What should he have done? he silently asked. Should he have told them the boy lied when he said he had married them, or was he right in remaining true to his vow? His ration of bread and water stood beside him, but though he had not eaten for twenty-four hours, he moved them aside and drew his beads from his pocket.

"Wilt thou give me a sign, O Lord?" he whispered, without raising his head.

16.

JOSE finished writing the name *Dolores* for the tenth time on the tablecloth. Then, glancing up at the clock, he erased it again, set down his coffee, and paid the check.

It was still light when he stepped out of the dingy little restaurant. The boulevard was fairly crowded with troops for the most part. There were a few foreigners, now, who sipped coffee at the open cafés and stared at the strange surroundings with wonder, or commented, in words foreign but unmistakable, on the passing street women. There were hard-faced Legionnaires, who drank quantities of wine, or else swaggered (and staggered) along the street, demanding the full sidewalk of passing civilians. And there was a sprinkling of soldiers in strange uniforms, whom Jose could now recognize as Italians — young men who huddled in protective groups, or else, singly, leaned against anything, homesick, and not caring who knew it. Save for the troops, there were few pedestrians, and these were mostly streetwalkers. The rest, men and women, moved quickly and unobtrusively about whatever business took them into this hostile atmosphere. Jose sauntered northward, stopping to light a cigarette. He turned half around as he did so and glanced up as he tossed away his match.

The man in the gray suit was still following him. Jose felt he would recognize anywhere the peculiarly shiny quality of that suit, and the black fedora hat pulled low over one eye. He wondered why he hadn't noticed him before Pablo spoke.

"They're not so clever with their secret service yet," he thought. "He might almost as well be wearing a sign." Jose glanced at an advertisement on a movie house, reopened that day; seemed to hesitate; then turned and walked on.

He walked beyond the cafés, and entered the business district. Passersby were rare now. The click of their heels on the pavement sounded loud against the deserted buildings, under the dreary sky. He turned down a dark alley, between two large buildings. He passed the service entrances on each side, closed and locked now, kicking his way through refuse that had lain untouched since the capture of the city. Another tiny alley, and then a rickety old warehouse. Jose stopped.

He had passed this building and had noted it — as he noted everything these days — during a stroll a couple of evenings before. The

place was deserted; the door, even, was half off its hinges. Jose stood gazing inside. He was listening for footsteps at the head of the alley.

There was no sound. Now, far away, was the sharp tap of a woman's step, that died slowly away. Then silence again. Jose did not dare turn to look up the alley. Tossing his cigarette away, he strode into the building.

The hall was dark, and stank with the filth of years. Keeping his hand against the wall, he moved along until his foot bumped against a step. Slowly, carefully, he mounted.

The stairs creaked their complaint against this unaccustomed use. The wood in every few steps was broken, and he had to put his weight on the wavering banister to keep his foot from slipping through. He reached the head of the stairs, passed under a pipe that seemed to run the width of the building, and crossed, quiet and very alert, to a partly opened door ahead. Reaching it, he looked cautiously inside.

It was a deserted loft, large, bare, with a line of grimy windows that reluctantly let in the last of the twilight.

"This ought to be as good as any place," he thought. He stationed himself behind the door, drew out a short length of lead pipe he had been carrying in the pocket of his loose trousers, and waited.

Minutes passed. Rats scampered across the far end of the loft; suddenly stopped; then pattered on again. Jose shifted his feet. His leg was nearly healed now, but it tired him to stand long in one position.

"Maybe he wasn't following me tonight, after all," he thought. And immediately he drew himself up, clenched the pipe tightly. Below, he could hear a creak on the stairs.

A pause, again the creak, then another short pause before it sounded. Jose decided the man was taking the stairs two at a time to cut out that much noise. He wished now he had tried to get a gun from Pablo or somebody, first. The other was sure to be armed. Jose stepped closer to the door.

The man must be halfway up now, he decided. He had given up trying to come noiselessly, and was mounting with a swift, steady pace. He neared the top; Jose figured he must be only a step or two below it. He drew back his hand, waiting to strike.

And then there was a sudden silence. For a moment Jose thought he could detect a little rubbing sound; then that stopped. He strained forward on his toes. He clenched the pipe until his fingers ached.

The rats started scampering again. Holding his breath, Jose listened for the creak of the boards as the man crossed to the door. But there was nothing. Then, all at once, the sweat broke out on his forehead. He swung softly around.

Fifteen feet away, another door led onto the same hall; and as he watched it, he could see it open, slowly, noiselessly. Now he realized the truth. The man, knowing Jose must have heard him, had made his way, hand over hand, along the pipe that ran across the hall above the stairs.

Jose slipped his lead pipe into his back pocket, and started for the other door, walking solidly.

"Maria?" he called gently.

The door was flung open, and the man in the gray suit sprang inside. Jose could see the outline of a fedora hat, and there was something that glinted in the man's hand. He stepped backward.

"Who — who are you?" he stuttered, in seeming surprise.

"That's my business." The man's clipped voice echoed in the empty loft. "Now, who the hell are *you*, and what are you doing here?"

"Why, I'm just a —. But have you the authority to ask?"

The man waved his gun.

"Here's my authority, if you can see it," he snapped.

"All right, then," Jose answered. "My name is Aldez Ruelda, and I've come here to meet a — a friend." He snickered as he added the latter.

"*De veras?* Communist friends, eh?" the man growled. But Jose's giving his right name seemed to make him less assured.

Jose waved his hand around.

"Of course. Here they are!" he exclaimed. "Do you want to address the meeting?" He stepped forward. "Listen," he pleaded. "My girl's apt to get here any minute. Be a good fellow, and get out of here, will you? If you want to see my papers —" He shoved his hand in his breast pocket.

The gun snapped up; but Jose drew out only a mass of papers. He sorted them, and handed one to the agent.

The man hesitated. But he had to pretend Jose was a stranger to him. He shifted his gun to his left hand.

"Open it," he ordered.

Jose opened it wide, held it in the palm of his hand.

"See?" he cried.

He jammed it against the man's face, slipped out his foot, and tripped him. The shot rang out through the loft, digging into the wall behind Jose; and almost immediately, Jose's pipe cracked down on the fedora hat.

But you take no chances in war. Jose pulled off the hat, drew back, and crashed the pipe against the man's head again. The sound of it sickened him.

"Now I can visit my comrades unescorted," he whispered, half in bravado; and chucking the pipe on the floor, he hurried out, and down the rickety stairs to the alley.

Pablo, the only customer of the little café, was seated at a corner table when Jose entered. With a jerk of his head, the young organizer motioned him to another table, and Jose sat down and ordered a glass of claret from the mouselike waitress. He sipped it in silence, while Pablo watched the door.

At last Pablo got up and strolled over to Jose's table.

"Where's your friend in the gray suit?" he asked, as he lighted a cigarette.

"Lying comfortably on the floor of an old loft," Jose answered, and he explained how he led the man down the alley between the two great buildings, up the stairs to the empty loft, and killed him. He felt rather proud of his ruse, until he saw Pablo's eyes narrow.

"I know the building," Pablo muttered, tossing his match away. "And you left him there? Left maybe useful papers on the man?" As he saw Jose's crestfallen look, he shrugged. "Come on," he said.

He led the way to the rear of the café, Jose following him. Pablo was whistling a popular tune from an American movie as he ran up a short flight of stairs. Still whistling, he tried the knob of a door at the head. After a moment, the door opened. Pablo motioned, and Jose followed him into the room.

There were three men in the small room. Pablo introduced them: Alfonso, Vicente, Bruno.

"Sit down," he ordered, pointing to a stool.

Jose sat down and glanced around. The room was bare, save for chairs and a rickety table. The lone window, like the windows in the loft, was — purposely or otherwise — dirt-crusted. The man introduced as Alfonso stood over Jose, watching him with keen, dark eyes. He was short, with thin, ascetic face and clipped moustache.

"So you want to get out of San Sebastian?" His voice was thin and sharp, like his face.

Jose nodded.

"I want to get back in the lines," he answered, "if there's a way of doing it."

Alfonso regarded him impersonally for a moment.

"You come from that village — Morino?" he asked, at last.

Jose nodded again.

"That's the center of this terrorist movement," Alfonso said, "church burning, farm burning, murder, spreading out from there, turning the people against us at a key spot. Yes," he waved impatiently, as Jose started to speak, "I know you're supposed to be at the back of it." He paused. "The Basque people," he went on, more to himself than to the others, "are really for us, as much as the rest of the people in Spain. But they're not going to stand for terrorism, any more than anybody else." He looked at Jose now. "If the people around there could be shown it's the Fascists who are the real terrorists, they'd be for us as much as the people in Bilbao and the Asturias," he said.

"I know that," Jose murmured.

Again Alfonso paused.

"You, more than anyone else, ought to be the one to show up who's back of this," he finally said. Then, "Would you like to try it?" he shot at Jose.

Jose's eyes lit up.

"Give me the chance!" he said.

"What do you know about it already?" Alfonso demanded.

Jose shook his head sadly.

"*Nada*. Not a damned thing," he admitted.

Alfonso walked to the window and stood gazing out through a tiny clean spot. Across from Jose sat the man called Vicente, a fat, jolly-looking man, nearing sixty, bald, save for little tufts of white hair that stuck up, like rabbit's ears, at either side of his head. Throughout the conversation, he had leaned back against the wall, hands crossed over his paunch, his eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles closed as if in sleep. Now he opened his eyes, lifted the spectacles to look at Jose under them, then lowered his head to look at Jose over them. Finally he took them off.

"This is serious business, my boy," he said in a fatherly tone. "The

Fascists have an army — conscripts, Moors, Legionnaires, Italians, Germans. We just have — the people." He shook his head reprovingly, as if it was Jose's fault. "They've got their hands full in Bilbao, training raw recruits and if these brigands can't be halted temporarily, on the march —" He looked up, as Alfonso turned back, nodded pleasantly to Jose, put his glasses on again, and leaned back, closing his eyes. Alfonso halted before Jose, putting his hands behind him.

"Tell me the whole story of the fire," he commanded.

Haltingly, Jose told the story, from receiving the note, presumably from Dolores, through the fire and his imprisonment, to his escape.

"And there's nobody in all that time," Alfonso asked, when he finished, "nobody friendly, that is, who you suspect might give you a lead?"

Jose shook his head.

"Nobody," he said.

Alfonso tapped his foot, gazing at the floor. Suddenly he looked up.

"Afterwards — you escaped and left the village," he said. "But before. Did anything out of the way happen before?"

Jose thought a moment.

"There was the time I was dragged in the car by mistake," he said at last. "Just a few days before." He told Alfonso the story. "And," he added quickly, "they had a woman, either dead or unconscious, in the bottom of the car!"

"Ah!" Alfonso whistled noiselessly through his teeth. "That might be . . . if she had discovered something about their plans . . . Did you learn anything, *anything at all*, about this woman?"

"Not a thing — except —" Jose smiled, "when I tripped over her I found she had skinny legs."

Alfonso crashed his fist impatiently on the back of a chair.

"Is there anybody sympathetic in your village who has influence with the people, someone who might be willing to help you hunt?" he asked.

"There's one," Jose replied, slowly. "There's Father Pedro. I know he loves the people, and the people certainly love him. They come from miles around to hear him, from a dozen villages. They'd do anything —" He stopped and shook his head. "But Father Pedro was taken very sick, just about that time, they said. Nobody could see him, and he might be dead now, he was so old." He shrugged helplessly, and then gazed with surprise at Alfonso's face.

"A priest — taken ill at that time," the other muttered, "a priest in that same church. One who could easily learn —" His fingers shot out at Jose. "What did you say about that woman's legs?" he shouted.

Jose stared at him. Then he jumped up.

"*Father Pedro!*" he cried. He sank back again. "It was Father Pedro's robe," he murmured to himself. "He knew too much . . ."

Vicente had opened his eyes. Holding his glasses at the tip of his nose, he nodded encouragingly, as if Jose was getting the answer to a hard problem he had given him. He took off his spectacles and pointed them at Alfonso.

"He's bright!" he declared. "I knew he was a bright boy!"

Alfonso was looking at Jose.

"Well," he said, "the problem seems now — find your Father Pedro. Will you try it?"

"They might have killed him," Jose objected.

Alfonso shook his head impatiently.

"They might have killed him, they might have kidnaped him for some other reason, maybe it wasn't he in the car in the first place. In a desperate moment, you've got to take the long chance. Will you take it?"

"Just a minute." The man introduced as Bruno, who had sat listening in the corner, did not move his chin from his cupped hands that rested on his knees. "We can fix up a pass to get him through the Fascist lines, all right. But what's to keep him from being arrested again for arson when he gets back to his village?"

Alfonso turned from Bruno to Jose. Jose smiled ruefully.

"I'd be all right if I could get hold of a certain bit of paper," he said, and he told about his cousin's Burgos credentials. "It's made out to J. Aldez Ruelda," he explained. "My mother's name was Perales, but she doesn't come from our village, and nobody knows that. But —" he shook his head, "it's safely locked in the drawer of Colonel Leon's desk, in the Fascist administration building."

Pablo stood up, walked slowly over to Jose.

"Are you known in the administration building?" he asked. "Can you get in there?"

"During office hours," Jose replied.

"What time do the first office people usually arrive there?"

"Nine or a little before. They're getting fifteen minutes later every day."

Pablo shoved his hands deep in his pockets.

"Willing to go earlier?" he asked, "say, shortly after eight?"

Jose looked at him, puzzled.

"But I couldn't get into the office," he objected. "Nor into the desk. I haven't any keys."

"A jimmy can take care of the desk," replied Pablo, "and, as to keys, a lot of provisions were made before the Fascists occupied San Sebastian — including taking duplicates of keys in public buildings. We can get a number before morning, and they can fix you up here for the night. Try it?" He raised his eyebrows questioningly. "You know what the chances are of your coming through."

"I know," Jose replied in a low voice. "And — I'll try it."

Alfonso had walked to the door, beret in hand. Now he turned, his fingers on the knob.

"We know what the chances are of your coming through from beginning to end," he said quietly, while the others listened. "If it weren't so important, we'd give it up before we started, but —" and now his thin lips tightened, "but we know something you probably don't know.

"We know a detachment of Legionnaires will be on the march tomorrow night — planning to pass through Morino!"

He crossed the room, took Jose's hand, gripped it silently, and then left. Bruno shook hands and followed him. As Jose walked to the door behind Pablo, he turned back. Vicente still leaned against the wall, hands across paunch, eyes closed, his head shaking reprovingly.

17.

PABLO called to the mouselike girl, who brought up a candle and led Jose along the corridor to a little room furnished solely with an iron bed. Here Jose undressed, climbed into bed, and forgetting the dangers of the next day, repeated *I'm going to see Dolores! I'm going to see Dolores!* until — or, so it seemed to him — the girl rapped on his door and entered, bringing a pitcher for his morning wash. Without a word, without even looking at him, she laid seven or eight keys and a small jimmy beside the pitcher.

Jose jumped out of bed, dressed, and washed in the cold water. The café was empty when he stepped out, after first carefully glancing up and down the street. It was early for Spaniards to be up, war or no war — it said seven fifteen by a street clock — and the sidewalks were deserted as he strode along to the district of boulevards and white fronted shops. He ate a roll and chocolate at his usual café, watching the clock, and a few minutes before eight, he rose, paid his check, and left.

A few workers moved slowly, dispiritedly, along the street. He was challenged by a soldier while waiting for an army truck to lumber past the crossing, and he showed his city pass. He turned the corner and walked toward the large administration building, and felt his heart jump.

A man leaned against a doorway across the street, watching him. And that man wore a gray suit of peculiar shiny quality, while a black fedora hat was pulled over one eye!

Automatically, Jose walked on. He was thinking: there *can't* be two such suits, two identical men, in the city; and he felt a chill up his back as he passed the man on the opposite side of the street. He did not dare turn and look at him. He moved on stiffly to the arched gateway of the administration building, and here he took out his handkerchief to blow his nose, and glanced back.

The man in the gray suit was walking toward him, sauntering a bit too carelessly. The picture of the murdered agent, lying on the floor of the loft, flashed across Jose's mind, and his impulse was to turn and run. Then he remembered his companions of last night.

"I've got to go through with it," he thought. "If they get me — they get me."

The guard at the outer gate recognized him, but demanded his

building pass. Jose showed it, and moved across the court to the building itself. Here the guard nodded shortly.

"Early, aren't you?" he asked, holding out his hand for the pass.

"Lot of work to be done today." Jose showed his slip and entered the building. As he turned the corner toward the staircase, he looked out toward the gateway.

The man in the gray suit was showing the guard papers, talking quickly meanwhile. Jose walked on with leaden feet to the stairway and up. The game was over before he started, he thought. But he had to go on; it wouldn't do any good to turn back now.

The sentry on his floor raised his eyebrows in surprise, and his lips set. He knew Jose's connections here were unofficial.

"Nobody's arrived on the floor yet," he muttered, barring the way.

Jose started to walk around him.

"Orders from the colonel's secretary to get here early," he snapped. "He's probably here." As the sentry still held out his arm, Jose added, "I'll go see — and wait if he hasn't arrived."

The guard hesitated; then dropped his hand.

"If he's not there, you come back and do your waiting here," he growled.

And now, with returning excitement, Jose walked down one deserted corridor and turned into another that led to Colonel Leon's office. He counted the doors: one, two, three, four and stopped. He glanced around, then pulled the keys from his pocket and stooped to try them.

The first didn't work, nor the second. He jerked upright and listened.

Back from where he had come, he heard mumbling voices. It didn't occur to him to stop, though; he thought of nothing — except opening that door. He pushed another key gently in the lock.

It fitted. He turned it, and the door opened.

He drew out the key, closed the door, and hurried to the desk. He pulled the jimmy from his pocket, and slipped it between the drawer and the desk. Then he strained to break it open.

The drawer held; but he worked, biting his lip, the sweat dripping from his forehead. Once, wondering by what marvel he had been so long undisturbed, he looked up; then he forgot that, and turned quickly back to his work. Half a minute later, with a grating noise that echoed in the silent room, the drawer jumped open.

It took him only a moment to find his Burgos pass. It was under other important looking papers, and he thrust them all in his pocket. "Might as well be shot for a lot as a little," he thought. He chucked the jimmy in the drawer, shut it, and ran back to the door.

Footsteps were coming down the corridor as he pulled the key out of the lock. He swung around but it was only an early secretary. The man looked at him curiously as Jose nodded in passing.

"I must look like a ghost in a sweat," he thought.

He tried to compose himself as he walked up to the floor guard.

"The fellow must be lazy," he said. He tried to drawl it, but it was hard for him to speak. "I'll wait downstairs."

The guard did not answer him; but there was a gleam in his narrowed eyes, and he clutched his rifle tightly. Jose heard the man follow him to the stairs, could almost feel the gun that pointed at his back. But as he reached the head of the stairs, he forgot that. The man in the gray suit stepped into view now at the foot and looked up at Jose. He held a revolver at his side.

Jose's foot stopped in mid-air; then he went stolidly on down to face defeat. As he descended each step, the gun rose higher, toward his breast. When he reached the man at the foot, the gun was jabbed in his side.

"Move slowly," the man growled through his teeth.

Eyes ahead, Jose walked to the turn in the corridor. When they rounded it, the pressure was removed from his side. Jose turned to look.

The gun had disappeared in the other's pocket. Jose raised his eyes. The man in the gray suit was Bruno, the silent conspirator of last night.

"Fine hours people get to work here," Bruno grumbled to the guard at the door as they reached him. "Don't they know there's a war going on?"

The guard did not answer. Jose was too agitated to speak, as they crossed the wide court. He glanced instinctively right and left, seeing a guard in heated discussion with a fat man at the far end.

As they reached the sentry at the outer gate, he heard a shout from the building behind them; the sentry from the upper floor had followed them! There was a shout from the sentry at the door; a shot.

Jose looked back, to see the guard at the door stagger forward and then crumple. The sentry at the gate ran past Jose and Bruno to his

side. Bruno grabbed Jose's arm as two more shots followed in quick succession. He pulled him outside the gate.

The street was empty, and Bruno led Jose quickly around the corner, into an alley; along to another street. Jose was trembling.

"What was that?" he gasped.

"Nothing that concerns you," his friend said sharply, glancing at a couple of passing workers. "Pull yourself together." They walked on in silence. "We got this suit and hat where you told me you left them last night — off your late shadow," Bruno said, at last. "Fit well?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "Excellent papers in his pocket, too."

"What did you do that for?" Jose asked hoarsely. He still found it hard to speak.

Bruno laughed mirthlessly. They turned a corner and he quickened their pace again.

"Do you think that sentry was going to stand there while you were jimmying the lock?" he asked. "My new papers show I'm a first class agent, and me and the sentry were giving you a chance to do your work, so I could get the goods on you. It was hard making him let me take you down to the commandant, instead of holding you there, but my papers were too good — though not good enough to keep him from following to see where we really went." He halted and faced Jose. "Now. Got what you want?"

Jose nodded. He started to speak, but swallowed instead.

"You know where you're going and how to get there?"

Jose nodded again.

"Of course," he said.

"Then start going — quick. They're probably after you already." They shook hands. "By the way," Bruno added, "you remember Vicente?"

"That funny old man last night?"

Bruno spat in the road.

"That was him you heard shot — after he gave the sentry his."

Jose started.

"*Vicente?* But what —"

"He has ways of getting in places — harmless looking old man. We were afraid of just what happened. So if they started yelling, he was to take a couple of shots, and everybody would think it was him they were after — for a while."

Jose stared at him.

"But that — that nice old man," he whispered.

Bruno shrugged.

"Part of the mess. And Vicente wanted to do it. Glad of the chance. Thought there was nothing left for him to do, up to last night." Bruno shook Jose's hand again, quickly, looking into his eyes. "You've got to try and make it now, Aldez," he said. Then he turned abruptly and walked away.

Jose, eyes blinded with tears, clenched his fists in his pockets and started walking, as swiftly as he dared, toward the lines that crossed the ocean highway, a kilometer or so away.

Rafael Aznar, arriving half an hour later, was in too much of a hurry to reach his office and a waiting telegram, to notice the air of excitement around. He strode to his desk, past his orderly who was bursting with news. A moment later, the wire in his hand, Rafael rushed into Colonel Leon's office.

"*Señor coronel!*" he cried, forgetting to salute. "I have news from Burgos! Your Aldez is a fake — a traitor — a spy!"

Only now he noticed the pale sentry, disarmed and standing between two guards, and a fat, short major, with bald sweating head, who pointed a trembling finger at the colonel's desk.

"See!" he gloated, "see! What did I tell you!"

Colonel Leon, who had arrived only a minute before, was gazing open-mouthed into his drawer. He looked up at Rafael, tried to speak, gulped, and flung out his hands helplessly.

Rafael immediately understood.

"But I had him followed!" he gasped. "Every minute of the day, he was followed! He's rifled your desk?" His eyes flashed with the old look of hate. "He's got those Burgos credentials? Listen, *coronel*," he began in a low, hurried voice, "maybe he's gone back to the Communist lines. If he has, we can't get him. But if he knows about the drive that starts tonight, with those credentials to fool people back home —! *Señor coronel!*" Rafael drew himself stiffly erect. "I am requesting a leave of absence, to take effect now."

18.

LUIS and Dolores accepted Father Mario's reluctant invitation, and drove back in the rear seat of the new church Ford. They sat in silence most of the trip, gazing at the humped shoulders of the priest and the broad back of Vieira, the manufacturer. Ahead of the Ford, and rapidly outdistancing it, was the marquesa's Hispano, where she rode beside Mayor Nardiz and the lawyer.

If the marquesa had been annoyed by the "marriage," she didn't show it. Instead, she gave a little cry of delight at the news, insisted upon being the first to kiss Dolores, and later made her a present of an Andalusian shawl which would have cost the girl a month's pay. Now Dolores pulled it off her shoulders, flew it a moment in the breeze, and then let it go.

"There," she said, with a short laugh, "goes our wedding present." She looked at Luis.

He didn't say anything. He was smiling nervously. She reached over and pressed his hand.

"It isn't your fault, Luis," she assured him. "It's just my plans are a little bigger than I am." She laughed again, dryly. "Why," she said, in a low voice, "we can't even tell people we've seen Father Pedro!"

Luis turned, questioningly.

"Don't you see?" she explained. "They told us he was put in prison because the See ordered it — they've got four of our best citizens to prove he's taken a vow of silence because he knows he's sinned. We haven't anything to tell," she went on, "except that he *was* in prison. And if we made a fuss about that, it's just another 'proof' we're fighting the Church." She shrugged, gazing at Father Mario's scrawny neck. "He'd talk to Jose!" she suddenly whispered, "I know it! If Jose would only come home!"

But Luis gloomily shook his head.

"It wouldn't do any good to tell people, anyhow," he muttered. "They're moving Father Pedro, right now." As Dolores looked around, "I heard the marquesa speaking to Carlos — in French. She said she wasn't taking any chances of you bringing a mob up to the villa to free him before he goes to Burgos."

Dolores laid her hand on his arm.

"Do you know where they're taking him, Luis?" she whispered, then, seeing the look of horror in his eyes, her fingers tightened on his

wrist. "*Luis!*" she exclaimed, "*they didn't* —" She stopped, as Vieira turned creakily around, a surprised look on his huge face.

The car ahead swung around the bend and entered the village fifteen minutes before the priest's car, with the Marquesa de Valera talking gaily with her two delighted companions. Already she had forgotten the failure of her little scheme in her excitement at being a part of what she sensed to be impending stirring events; and when Mayor Nardiz invited her to visit his office where he hoped that day to be visited by important personages, she gladly accepted.

The car stopped before the village hall; the little mayor descended, and, with gallantry, aided her to the sidewalk. With the lawyer, they went up the path and into the hall. As they entered the mayor's office, both Nardiz and Marco exclaimed in astonishment.

The Marquesa de Valera noted displeasure as well as surprise in their outburst, but, for her part, her sensation was quite pleasurable. For although the young man rising to greet them was disheveled and covered with dust, he was good looking, which was enough for the marquesa.

In the early days of the invasion, it was comparatively easy to get through the not-too-well organized lines of either side. Jose was stopped once by the Fascists, and produced his Burgos credentials. When he reached the Loyalist lines, some distance away, it was simply a matter of finding officers to identify him, which took less than an hour. After that, he strode along the dusty highway, unchallenged, receiving one lift from a peasant in a donkey cart after telling him he was in the Loyalist army, and another to Andurra, the village next to Morino, by showing his Burgos pass to a portly gentleman driving a Buick.

His first sight when he alighted — a mass of dead ashes where the old Andurran church had stood — filled him with a choking anger. He hurried on, trotting part of the way; the constant thought of the Legionnaires, preparing to march, drove him on like a nightmare. "*You've got to hurry!*" he kept whispering, "*Hurry, hurry!*" He passed the ruins of a sheep-raiser's cottage, just above him on the mountainside; and half an hour later, he turned the corner, to see ahead the charred remains of the church of Morino, beside which rose the stuccoed parish house, intact. He started running around the corner

toward the village hall; he would present his credentials to the mayor, and then find Dolores.

At the thought of Dolores, his spirits rose high. He ran up the steps of the hall, and into the arms of a gendarme, who first jumped back in amazement, and then, suddenly, bristled with weapons.

One glance at the Burgos pass, however, made him back away as from a charm; and Jose heard him run down and around toward the square — probably to spread the big news — as he entered the mayor's office. He had to wait fifteen minutes for Nardiz, and when, at last, he did come in with Marco, the lawyer, and a well-dressed young woman, his reception of Jose was enthusiastic, if not too cordial.

"You dare show yourself in this village, young man?" Nardiz roared at him.

"I dare," Jose replied, impatiently. He pulled out his pass and showed it to the mayor, whose mouth fell open. Nardiz showed the pass to the others, meanwhile gazing at Jose almost in awe.

"And what — if I may ask, señor — made you change your views?" he said.

Jose repeated his well-rehearsed story: how his fury at the radicals' burning the church and letting him take the blame caused him to join the "Nationalist" side. He saw the mayor and the lady exchange glances. "So!" he thought, "she knows something, too!"

"Now," he went on, "I've been sent to organize forces. A decisive moment," he went on, authoritatively, "is rapidly approaching, and I must have full power to speak and organize." *A decisive moment!* As he thought of the implication of the words, he jumped up impatiently.

Mayor Nardiz, too, jumped up, bowing and smiling.

"Certainly, señor, certainly," he assured Jose. "And you come at a fortunate moment. We, too, you see, way off here, have heard hopeful rumors and tonight there is to be a meeting in the square. People from a dozen villages around! Such a meeting!" He spread his hands. "Not since —." He stopped suddenly, and Jose, who had been striding back and forth, turned.

"Not since they used to come to hear Father Pedro?" he asked.

He noticed a slight stiffening on the part of all three. But Nardiz seemed all at once interested in Jose's clothing.

"It is a pity señor did not dress more appropriately for the occasion," he murmured.

"Perhaps pass through the Communist lines in a Nationalist officer's uniform?" Jose snapped.

"The señor, I think —" It was the Marquesa de Valera's low voice, "looks sufficiently handsome."

Jose glanced at her. The woman was looking directly into his eyes, smiling provocatively. He nodded his acknowledgments; then, remembering the glance that had passed between the mayor and herself at the mention of the fire, he returned her smile.

"That," he said, "is better than the uniform of a general," and he flushed at being able to use such a fine phrase.

The marquesa laughed and inclined her head.

"The señor is gallant!" she exclaimed. "Today seems to be the day for gallantry! It is a shame the señor missed the fine marriage at my house between my gardener and — what is her name? Dolores — what was her name?" she asked the mayor.

Hearing the name, "Dolores," Jose smiled. *Very soon*, he thought, *I'll be seeing* my *Dolores!* He still smiled a moment after hearing Nardiz' reply.

"Gracia," answered the mayor. "Dolores Gracia. We must enter the marriage properly," he added, starting to fuss around his desk, "if you can consider such a marriage proper —" he broke off, coughing violently.

But Jose did not hear his words, nor notice the cough. The smile still mechanically fixed on his lips, he gazed uncomprehendingly at the mayor.

"The name?" he asked. "The girl's name? I didn't understand."

"Gracia," Nardiz replied. "Dolores Gracia. One of the Red hussies in the village here. Married a Luis somebody today out at the Marquesa de Valera's." He still fussed around the papers on his desk.

Slowly, Jose's smile faded. The little color in his face ebbed under his tanned cheeks. For a long moment he gazed at the mayor, as if trying to place him. Sensing the stare, Nardiz jerked up his head.

"Señor said —?" he mumbled.

"Must get to work," Jose muttered. He turned and started for the door. He crashed against a chair and sent it sliding across the floor, but he didn't even notice it.

Hurrying around the hall, he saw a small group huddled in a far corner of the square, and in a world of unreality that surrounded him

as he walked, he saw one vivid figure stand out from the deadness, looking toward him. He strode across the square.

Dolores, seeing him coming, forgot everything else in her horror of the rumor that already had spread around the village. She watched Jose approach, walking stiffly. He seemed a stranger to her.

Neither greeted the other. But when Jose stopped and stared down at her, Dolores stepped forward.

"Jose!" she demanded, in a low voice, "they say — it isn't true what they say, is it? You're not a Fascist!"

Jose didn't hear her. He kept staring at her, his eyes so strange she stepped back. Then, in a voice as unreal as a puppet's, he said,

"Are you married, Dolores?"

Dolores started. It had never occurred to her the story would become known. Half a dozen people around cried out in astonishment. She glanced at Luis beside her, head lowered in embarrassment and at Jose, standing tense. She must wait, she thought, in her confusion, she couldn't tell him the story now! She knew her cheeks were red, and she said, quickly, sharply: "You're not answering my question, Jose. Tell me you haven't become a Fascist!"

For some time Jose gazed blankly, seeing her reddened cheeks and Luis' obvious embarrassment. Then a look of comprehension came over his face. For one second she saw an expression she would never forget. Then his face became wooden.

He bowed low, thrusting his hand in his pocket. He drew out a folded paper, flipped it open, and held it out to her.

"My credentials from Burgos, señorita," he said.

She looked at it without touching it; then looked up at him, hate in her eyes. She started to speak; closed her lips; then, raising her head:

"The title is *señora*, if you please," she said, as she turned away.

Jose never knew how far he walked along the ocean highway. He had turned back, and was sitting on his old favorite spot on the promontory, overlooking the sea, when the black confusion finally left him. He thought: it was about this time of day she came up here.

He had been day-dreaming about her, and in that dream, she had said, *May I sit beside you?* and it had seemed so real, he had smiled. He smiled now as he gazed out over the rough green sea. "And then," he told himself, "I turned around slowly, and there —." He slowly turned . . . to see the highway, stretching, deserted, to the bend. He threw himself down, burying his face in the grass.

As quickly he sat upright; jumped to his feet. Here he was mooning about something that was over, and it was evening, and nothing had been done, *nothing had been done!* He started walking rapidly toward the village.

"That's all over," he said to himself, and he tried to force his jumbled thoughts upon his desperate job. As he neared the head of the square, he looked up, to see Dolores and Luis strolling toward him, not twenty feet away.

Jose forced back the rising ache, and when he stopped before them, his face was expressionless, as was his voice.

"Dolores," he said, "what you've done — that's your business. But the Legionnaires are coming." The nightmare feeling surged up in him again. "*Tonight!* They're marching down the highway *tonight!*" He saw horror cross her face, and he went on quickly. "The people here have got to be shown at the big meeting tonight who their real enemy is, who burned their churches and farms, who committed murder," he explained breathlessly, "and there's one person who maybe can tell them — everybody for miles around would believe what he said." He suddenly grasped her hand. "Dolores! Can you tell me how to find Father Pedro?"

Dolores started. Slowly her eyes widened, and she smiled.

"Jose!" she said. "It wasn't true, then! You're not a —"

"Of course I'm not!" The touch of her hand set his heart pounding again, and he spoke irritably. "Tell me — *where is Father Pedro?*"

Dolores withdrew her hand gently. But despite his sharp tone, the smile still flickered on her lips. She saw a car approaching behind Jose, and she spoke hurriedly.

"He's being held at the Marquesa de Valera's — an old cell in the slime, way beneath —" She stopped as the car drew up beside them with shrieking brakes. The Marquesa de Valera lowered the rear window, smiling as Jose turned.

"You ran out on us, rather unceremoniously, Señor Aldez," she said reproachfully, "but I know these are no times for etiquette. And now," she went on, as Jose tried to say something, "would you join me in a hurried meal before the meeting? I know you're more or less of a stranger here."

As Jose hesitated, thinking of his mother whom he had not yet seen, the marquesa's eyes moved on to Luis, who stood, beret in hand, with Dolores beside him. The woman's smile disappeared.

"Thank you," Jose replied, as she turned back to him, "I'd like to." He swung around to Dolores. "Quick," he said, under his breath. "Where is he?"

Dolores' head was lowered.

"First door right, as you go in the hall. Down — the second of two cells." Jose could not see her eyes as, without another word, she walked on, Luis beside her.

The marquesa's eyes were cold as Jose climbed into the car.

"I didn't recognize my gardener at first," she said. "You keep rather — proletarian company, do you not?"

So she didn't know he was as "low" as the others. Jose half smiled, settling himself beside her. For an instant, as the sound of the motor rose and the car moved off, he thought he heard an anguished call behind him. Then he shrugged; Dolores was too much on his mind, he told himself. He turned to the marquesa.

"There are no proletarians and no aristocrats," he answered her, "when you're trying to get a man to fight on your side."

The marquesa's face cleared.

"Of course," she agreed. "And building an army must be thrilling work!" she added, laying her hand on his. "Tell me about it!" she demanded.

It was hard to talk, torn between the memory of Dolores' marriage and an overwhelming impatience that made the swift-moving car seem as stationary as the back of the chauffeur in front of him. But he recounted battle stories, some true, some made up — whichever came the more easily to him at the moment; and at the bloodcurdling parts, he could feel the pressure of her hand on his. The car finally turned into the drive and rolled smoothly between the profusion of flowers, all colorless and lifeless, now, in the deepening gray of twilight. The villa appeared dark, rambling, dreary in the dying light. A feeling of repugnance shot through Jose as they drove up before the large doorway.

"Lucky it's wartime," laughed the marquesa as he helped her from the car. "Otherwise the proper people in my house would be shocked by your — shall I call it picturesque — costume."

Jose smiled and murmured politely in reply. The smile left him, however, as, turning up the walk, he saw through the window beside the door a pale face, with eyes staring intently at him — a face that stirred vague but uncomfortable memories.

19.

IT was the stranger who opened the door, a slender young rebel officer, with handsome, voluptuous face. He bowed low to the marquesa.

"You feel better, Captain?" she asked. She turned to Jose. "Captain Montez is convalescing here from a wound —" she gestured toward Jose. "Señor Aldez, Captain, who is serving our cause in a more or less mysterious capacity."

Jose bowed, then looked up, to see the captain regarding him intently.

"Have we not met before?" Montez asked.

Jose was unpleasantly sure that they had, though he could not remember the occasion. However, he smiled.

"Possibly, *Señor Capitán.* One meets so many these days. Could it have been at Burgos?"

The other shook his head.

"I have not had the pleasure of a visit to Burgos."

"Perhaps," said the marquesa, as she removed her gloves and passed them to a servant, "it was at San Sebastian. Señor Aldez," she explained, "just returned from that city."

A light appeared in the captain's eyes.

"Ah, San Sebastian?" he exclaimed.

But now the marquesa, smiling, laid her hand on the captain's arm.

"If you will forgive us, Captain," she said, "Señor Aldez and I must have a little talk." She smiled. "Till dinnertime?" she added.

Jose saw a sneer quickly cross the man's face as his hostess turned to order cognac from the waiting servant. While she led the way across the great, gloomy hall, he glanced around him.

Often, as a boy, like the other boys of the countryside, he had sneaked around the grounds of the villa. With others, particularly Rafael, he had explored the mysterious chateau behind the great house, that, during centuries of unoccupancy, had taken on legend, and he had tried unsuccessfully to scale the bleak walls. But this was the first time he had entered the villa itself. Immediately, he glanced to the right, and a little tingle ran through him as he saw the narrow iron door. He followed the marquesa into the large drawing room.

Once he would have been wide-eyed at seeing its glittering crystal, its tables and chairs of gilt and pale gold coverings, and felt abashed by his dusty, coarse clothing. Now, however, other emotions

governed him. Only one thing he noted carefully: the line of French windows at the end of the room.

The marquesa waved him to the divan beside her.

"I wanted to have you to myself," she said smiling, "to hear, all by myself, your thrilling accounts of the war." She glanced up, as the servant Carlos appeared, carrying a tray with bottles and glasses. She waited until he departed, closing the door firmly behind him. Then she jumped up and filled the glasses.

She held her own high.

"To General Franco! *Arriba España!*" she cried.

Jose's glass, halfway to his lips, slopped over a bit. He coughed.

"Let's make it better than that," he said. "To the success of justice! Death to those who would take what rightly belongs to us!"

The marquesa laughed.

"A very pretty speech!" she declared. She drained her glass and sank down again beside him. "And now," she said, laying her hand on his, "tell me what happened after you killed that Communist spy in the gray suit, before we took San Sebastian!"

Jose, sitting very still, squirmed inside with impatience. Must he sit here chattering, while the hours, the numbered minutes, were slipping by? He talked on, eyes on the open window, scarcely aware of what he said. Once or twice he pressed the hand that had slipped into his but each time it brought the memory of the pressure of another hand, like a knife-thrust, and his own hand relaxed. Father Pedro! Was he right beneath him now, while he sat talking drivel? . . . He was not aware that he had stopped talking, until the woman's hand was sharply withdrawn from his.

"I'm exceedingly sorry if I'm boring you with my questions," said the marquesa coldly.

Jose turned, quickly.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "I was just thinking —" he ran his hand nervously through his hair, "there are so many important things!" he murmured.

Her tight lips relaxed.

"Such as —?"

Jose laughed.

"My sins," he replied.

She was smiling now.

"They must be terrible in those war towns!" She laughed. "Tell

me all about the *peace* life of a dashing young soldier," she demanded, "if it's not too horrible."

Champing within, Jose told of conquests, and hinted at dark doings. And as he talked, each "conquest" resembled Dolores more and more strongly. He forgot the marquesa. He was describing "a girl he'd met," at first graphically, then, as she became more vivid to him, his words slowed . . . stopped altogether. Suddenly he swung around.

"I — I'm sorry," he said confused. "I was — worrying about things again . . ."

There was a strange little smile on the marquesa's face as she watched him. It was not a happy smile.

"You love her, don't you?" she said. She reached out her hand to touch his, then drew it back and stood up. She looked down at him. "It is wonderful to love, *really* love, isn't it?" she said, touching him lightly on the shoulder.

Jose watched her in amazement as she walked to the long window. For the first time he felt attracted to her. "But how strange she is!" he thought.

The marquesa gazed into the twilit garden beyond the window, one hand on the silken hangings.

"Am I acting?" she asked herself. And then she smiled. Of course she was acting. She was acting, she knew, even now when she was smiling bitterly and questioning herself. She would be acting if she recalled, sadly, a love, so many years ago . . . She felt stifled, opened the window wider, and breathed the clear evening air.

She suddenly remembered once before when she had stood here ("a woman like myself always looks effective at a French window!") and she had pictured that other boy sitting behind her, his handsome face and well-knit body. ("At least then I was honest!" she told herself.) And slowly her thoughts turned to the young man who now sat, on the same divan. She pictured his clear eyes, the intense, youthful love shining on his face. He, too, had a handsome body. The marquesa wheeled around, walked quickly to the cord by the door, and pulled it.

"I was forgetting my duties as a hostess," she told Jose, without looking at him, "and my duty to see that you are driven to Morino in time for the meeting." She turned, as the door opened. "Dinner, immediately, Carlos," she ordered.

In the dim-lit dining room, together with the marquesa and Captain Montez, Jose ate the most excellent meal ever put before him, scarcely knowing what he was eating. He was not too naïve to be ignorant of the marquesa's amorous tendencies, and remembering her curtness in the drawing room, he believed that only civility kept her from showing her dislike for him now.

"If only she *had* ordered me away!" he thought.

He knew the location of the iron door and the lay of the land; and he could have hung around and returned when it was completely dark. But now he was forced first to drive to the village.

He was so impatient that he was hardly aware of the others who sat at the long table, beneath the line of grim old portraits. The marquesa ate lightly, addressing him occasionally when hospitality absolutely demanded it but there was a restraint in her words and in her actions. Captain Montez made no pretense at conversation and, in the low light, his eyes were constantly on Jose's face. Jose fairly jumped up when, at last, the marquesa rose and turned to the servant behind her.

"The servants may leave immediately for Morino, Dario," she said. "They may take a donkey cart. It is important they should attend the great meeting. You and Carlos will remain here." As the man bowed, she turned to Captain Montez. "You feel still too unwell to go, Captain?" she asked.

The captain nodded.

"If it is convenient, I shall remain here, Señora Marquesa," he replied.

With short apology to Jose, the marquesa went upstairs to prepare herself for the evening. Jose walked back to the drawing room and sank again on the divan. He watched his fellow guest, who followed him in and strolled across the room. Once the captain stopped and half turned, as if to say something. Then, turning back, he went out through the French window and strolled across the lawn, into the darkness.

For a few minutes Jose sat, sprawled out, clenching and unclenching his fists in his pockets. His eyes turned several times toward the open door, into the hall, lit by one feeble electric torch. From the dining room, he could faintly hear the discreet servant, clearing the table. He jumped up.

Hands in pockets, he sauntered across the drawing room, into the

great hall. He glanced around, while his heart beat faster; looked over toward the iron door. He crossed to it; stood regarding it.

The villa was now as silent as if empty. *Soon*, he thought, *I'll be back here* . . . He drew his hand from his pocket and idly pulled at the ancient handle.

The door creaked open.

Jose caught his breath. He glanced quickly around; then, pulling a match from his pocket, he scratched it, slipped inside, and drew the door shut behind him. The match flared up, and the steep, winding flight of stairs showed dimly beneath him in the flickering, yellow light.

He ran down, striking match after match, his hand brushing against the wall. It seemed long minutes before he reached the bottom and saw a corridor that stretched ahead, lost in darkness.

Quickly, he struck another match. His heart was pounding now. He hurried past a cell, empty, save for a rumpled bed. He moved on, to the next cell, with a name already on his lips — and stopped, when he saw the door was open and the cell empty.

He stepped inside, lighting another match. There were signs of recent occupancy but one glance told him nobody could be concealed in that tiny place.

But perhaps Dolores had made a mistake. He ran outside the cell, and down the corridor. There were no other cells.

Two minutes later, he was climbing the steps, circling round and round, numb with bewilderment. It was only as he placed his hand on the door that he remembered caution.

He opened it slowly; listened. Then he slipped outside. As he closed the door, he heard a sound behind him and whirled around. Captain Montez was just appearing through the portieres that shut off the dining room.

He stopped and regarded Jose. There was a new glint in his narrowed eyes, and now a smile played on his pale lips.

"Señor is interested in that door?" he asked softly. As he approached Jose, the two servants, Carlos and Dario, slipped noiselessly through the portieres, and halted, as if waiting orders.

Jose fingered the ironwrought scrollwork.

"It's a well-made old door, isn't it?" He managed to make his voice casual.

The captain stepped close to Jose. At that moment Jose heard the marquesa descending to the landing behind him.

"Well-made, indeed," agreed the captain, smiling, "better made, in fact, unfortunately, than your plans, *amigo*. You see," he went on, before Jose could speak, "a contemplative stroll in the garden finally placed you in my mind. How, *Señor Communista*," he continued, still placidly smiling, "is the little wound I gave you? Not as serious, I take it, as I had hoped."

And, in a flash, Jose saw the man — not the pale, groomed officer who stood before him, but a torn, disheveled killer, with blood-maddened eyes, jerking up his gun to fire. He was conscious of the two servants, who had moved quietly as if to guard the outer door, of the Marquesa de Valera, who had nearly reached the foot of the stairs behind him. Alert, he gazed into the captain's handsome face — and saw there the same sneer that was on it when the marquesa led him into the drawing room. Jose stepped forward.

"How dare you say that, señor!" he demanded, and drawing back his hand, he slapped the captain across the cheek.

The amazed captain fell back, as Jose heard a startled cry behind him. He wheeled around.

"Señora Marquesa!" he cried, in seeming confusion. "I didn't know —"

But the young woman stepped between them, eyes blazing.

"What does this mean?" she demanded. "Señor Aldez! Captain Montez!"

The captain, his face deadly white, tried to step around the marquesa, his hand slipping to where his gun should have been.

"It means —" he began, in a low voice of fury.

But Jose interrupted.

"It means, Señora Marquesa," he said quickly, "— since you saw what happened — that when a so-called gentleman —" he took a deep breath of righteous indignation, " — asks me, as he just did, if I have enjoyed certain pleasures with my hostess, then I feel I ought to . . ." He shrugged helplessly — and watched the couple. And immediately knew he had hit it right.

The captain was speechless with astonishment. But the marquesa made up for his silence. Though her voice was still low and modulated, her words of vituperation flowed over one another like water over a cascade.

"And now," she finished, breathlessly, "be sure you're gone when I get back!"

"But Señora Marquesa!" exclaimed the captain, finding his voice at last, "I never told him —"

For the second time his cheek tingled as she slapped him. The marquesa turned to Jose.

"If you are ready, Señor Aldez," she said, shortly.

But now Captain Montez sprang in front of them, spreading his arms to bar their way.

"Carlos! Dario! Stop him!" he commanded. Then, as the servants came hesitantly over to Jose, he turned to the marquesa. "If you must believe that liar, Señora Marquesa," he began, hurriedly, "I regret it from the bottom of my heart. But my sorrow is of no importance now. That man must not escape. The *canaille* is a Communist, and fought against me in the lines before San Sebastian. I found him a minute ago," he added shortly, "at that door leading to the cells!"

The marquesa waited until he finished.

"Are you through now?" she asked, coolly, "or have you better ways of maligning the man who defended me?" She turned to the two men who had gently grasped Jose's arms. "Carlos! Dario!" she said sharply. Under her gaze, the men hesitated; then their arms dropped to their sides. "Now go to the kitchen. Immediately!"

She turned back to the door, and stopped, with lifted brows, as the raised arms of the captain still barred them. Jose stepped forward, and with a violent shove, sent the weakened officer reeling against the wall. Then he opened the door for the marquesa.

He breathed the cool evening air gratefully as they crossed to the waiting car. It was good to get out of that villa, he thought, to get away safe from the captain and the silent but powerful-looking servants — "and never go back!" he added to himself, with a little smile.

But as the car hummed through the night, as he watched the headlights, swiftly and smoothly mow down the darkness before them, picking out trees and rocks that speeded noiselessly by to sudden oblivion, his momentary elation disappeared, his spirits sank, leaving him dull with hopelessness.

Dolores distrusted him; lied to him. With this decisive day nearly over, she had sent him on a wild goose chase. And now what was there left to do?

Speak to the mass of people himself? He would do it; but he knew what would happen. First, astounded by what he had to say, they

would look again upon him as the bandit, church and farm burner, murderer; and he would be lucky if he lived to finish his speech. He was so engrossed in his thoughts that he did not even hear the low voice beside him.

For the first time in her life, the marquesa was diffident. She even found herself stammering as she tried to comment casually on the evening. Then, as time passed, and Jose ignored her, anger rose in her to replace this strange timidity.

Who was this oaf, that he should dare be disdainful of a lady of her standing? The minutes silently passed, and her anger burned higher. "If he weren't some kind of Nationalist official . . ." she said to herself, clenching her fists in her lap. Her lips tight-pressed, she raised her eyes, to see the dim lights of the village before them. The car stopped above the square.

It was packed, they could see, as they descended. Jammed into an almost immovable body, the massed faces, flickering palely in the light of half a dozen flaming torches and the lone street lamp, were turned toward the speakers' stand and "altar," around the corner of the village hall. Jose could see the people, crowded into the alleys below the square, disappearing into the darkness, filling the windows, sitting on the sills, in the six- and seven-storied tenements that lined the three lower sides.

Already the speaking had commenced; and as Jose and the marquesa descended by the side of the hall, they could indistinctly hear a re-echoing voice. When finally they emerged in view of the stand, the marquesa gave a glad cry.

"It's Aznar!" she exclaimed, "Rafael Aznar!"

With sharp commands, she wormed her way toward the seat reserved for her on the stand. But Jose stopped at the edge of the crowd.

He stood there, unafraid, but listless with despair. There was nothing more to be done, he told himself. In the shadow of a huge chestnut tree, he saw the marquesa's chauffeur shove his way into the crowd. Jose listened to — though hardly heard — Rafael's words that carried, loud and clear, across the dark mass.

"But you won't have to lock your doors, in fear and trembling, any longer. You won't be afraid of your homes going up in flames at night, or that the Communists will murder you in your beds. For now I can tell you, the Nationalist troops are already on the march!

"*Before morning, they will be in Morino!*"

A low roar rose from the multitude. Was it a cheer, or an inarticulate protest? Jose did not notice. He was listening now.

"You will be free of spies like that Aldez! They are traitors and murderers! They are slime, *slime* —"

Jose clapped his hands before his face. He stood that way a moment, hearing nothing, unaware of the voice, of the crowd, while a confusion of thoughts and memories rushed through his mind. Then, all at once, pulling down his hands, he swung around and hurried through the darkness, up the hill.

No one had noticed him; but he didn't think of that. Once on the deserted highway, he ran back to the marquesa's car.

The front window was partly down, and he slipped his hand in and opened the door. For a second he hesitated, wishing for the impossible — the help of a friend. Then he jumped in and slammed the door behind him.

He had learned to drive a truck passably well at the front; but minutes were lost, starting and stalling, while he turned the car about. Then, at last, he shifted into second, into high, and shot down the empty, wide road, headed for the Marquesa de Valera's villa.

20. AS he tore along the road, Jose ran his hand over the car pocket at his side, and felt two hard lumps. He opened the flap, reached in, and pulled out the flash he had expected to find there. Then he felt around again; his fingers closed on an object, and he laughed. It was a gun.

"Now if you'd only thought to put the keys I want in there," he murmured.

In a moment, though, he was sober again. The gun might make things easier; but it was still a long way from being a game; and a picture of the dark villa, empty, save for the captain and the two servants, flashed across his mind. Immediately, however, he concentrated upon his plans, while, in the back of his head, over and over, he repeated the phrase: "She believed me, until the marquesa stopped her car!" as if that reassured him. When he approached the villa's walls, he slowed the machine and turned into the gate.

The villa itself was some distance away, hidden by trees and high shrubbery. Jose turned the purring automobile into a drive he remembered that led sharply to the right, near the gates. He stopped, after rolling thirty feet, beneath the protection of a line of sweetish-smelling chestnut trees, and got out.

The villa loomed darkly before him as he moved cautiously through the heavy-scented garden. The windows in front were unlighted, and gleamed velvet-smooth under the star-speckled sky. Jose slipped around to the north wing, keeping as closely as possible to the protection of the shrubbery. There was one light here, in a second story window — Captain Montez' room, he decided. He continued on, around the back.

Twenty feet away rose the walls of the ancient chateau, roofless, its high, jagged top outlined against the sky. Running noiselessly he circled it, examining it carefully. But it was as he had remembered it from his boyhood: those thick walls, that held the dark secrets of centuries, were impenetrable, the small windows too far up, the great entrance way barred and double-barred. He circled back to the villa, and found himself before the only lighted window in the rear. He crossed to it, and peered inside.

Carlos and Dario sat at a table in their shirtsleeves, playing cards, a bottle of wine at their side. Jose moved on, keeping close to the wall. He turned the corner, and reached the line of French windows that led into the drawing room. He stepped to the third window,

through which the captain had come out to the garden, and tried it.

It gave, opening quietly. He went inside, and closed it; stood listening a moment. Then, softly, he crossed to the hall.

The dim electric torch still burned there. He peered around, then ran across to the iron door and pulled at the handle. It was locked. Jose returned to the drawing room.

Here he felt for the bell cord by the door, and pulled it. He could just hear its jingle in the distant kitchen. He drew his gun and waited.

He had to wait a long time, and became suspicious. Then, when the door opened and he saw Carlos outlined against the hall light, he realized he had stopped to pull down his sleeves and slip on his jacket. The servant hesitated on the threshold of the darkened room.

"Captain Montez?" he said, timidly.

Jose stepped forward and jammed the gun in the man's stomach.

"I want the key to the iron door," he said, gruffly. "I want the cell keys, *all* of them. Lead me to them, quick and quiet, and maybe I won't shoot you."

The servant stepped back, startled. Then he drew himself up and bowed.

"*Si, señor*," he said, tonelessly. "If señor will follow me."

He led the way down the hall. Halfway along, Jose jabbed the gun in his back.

"I said *quiet*," he whispered.

"*Si, señor*." He might have been taking an order for a brandy. He led the way into a little room, just beyond. "I must turn on the lights, señor," he said, low.

"Stand still a minute." Jose listened. He closed the door behind him and snapped on the torch. "This will do," he said.

They were in a book-filled den. Carlos stepped to an old desk of heavy oak. He opened a drawer and pushed his hand way back.

"No tricks," said Jose.

"No, señor." He drew out a key, unlocked the desk itself, and opened a smaller drawer. He reached in and produced a handful of keys.

"*All* of them!"

"*Si, señor*."

Together, they tiptoed across the hall again, and, on Jose's orders, Carlos unlocked the iron door. Carlos led the way down the winding stairway, after Jose had shut the door behind him, there being no

keyhole with which to lock it on this side. They reached the foot of the flight, the torch lighting the way before them, and walked along the corridor. Jose stopped at Pedro's cell.

"Fit the right key in the lock here," he ordered.

"*Si, señor.*" The man found the key and slipped it in.

"Now step inside."

"*Si, señor.*" Carlos stepped inside. Jose slammed the door, removed the key, and put it in his pocket, along with the other keys Carlos had given him.

The servant stood respectfully at attention as Jose turned away.

"Señor will be good enough to explain to the marquesa?" he asked. "There are little duties she would be expecting of me tonight."

But Jose did not answer. He was intent, now, on running his torch slowly up and down the corridor. His job, he knew, had just begun.

As Rafael ended his speech and seated himself, the Marquesa de Valera reached forward and touched him. Rafael jumped up and came back to sit beside her.

"It is true, as you say, Señor — pardon me — Lieutenant Aznar," she began, excitedly, scarcely waiting to greet him, "that this Aldez is a spy?"

Before Rafael could answer, however, a voice from below the platform called softly but sharply to her. She turned and saw her chauffeur, his eyes wide with mixed emotions.

"The car, Señora Marquesa!" he sputtered. "Somebody has stolen the car!"

The marquesa muffled a sharp cry, as Mayor Nardiz stalked to the front of the platform to begin his speech. Her first thought was of Jose. She turned to Rafael, and in low, excited tones, explained.

"He heard you speak, and is escaping!" she declared.

Rafael growled with thwarted anger.

"But he wouldn't escape," he muttered, "not that boy, if he still had some dirty work to do!"

The marquesa started, recalling that Captain Montez had seen him at the iron door. If only she had listened to him, she thought. If only she'd had sense enough to see he was really a Communist, and not the clear-eyed boy he appeared to be!

"He's gone back to my place!" she exclaimed, "although we've moved the old —" She caught herself, and stopped.

Rafael started up, his eyes eager.

"There's something he could do at your place?" he asked. Then, as the marquesa hesitated: "Never mind *what* it is," he said hurriedly, "so long as there's a chance he's there! Listen, Señora Marquesa," he said, in a low voice, leaning over her chair, "my uncle's car is in front of the parish house. If you'll go up to the highway, I'll meet you there in five minutes!"

At last the circle of light, moving slowly through the darkness along the hard-packed ground, picked out what Jose sought: an iron handle. Running over to it, he could see the dirt had been recently cleared away, and he made out a circular line around it. He stooped, grasped the handle, and yanked.

It resisted for a moment; then it gave, sending him back a couple of steps, with a heavy, round cover in his hand. He dropped it, sank to his knees, and turned his light down the open hole.

A vertical iron ladder dropped about fifteen feet. The light gleamed on stagnant water, moving turgidly. Jose gazed down, fascinated.

From his childhood, this almost mythical hole had been a dreaded spot. During generations, the children throughout the countryside were frightened into obedience by the threat of being lowered here, into the slime and crawling things. How old it was, nobody knew; it was as old as the nearby chateau, with which it was supposed to be connected, and that was of unrecorded age. The first rumors of the dungeon's existence appeared at the time of the Carlist uprising, in 1836, when the besieged seigneurs and their dependents were said to have escaped to the chateau, where they remained while the villa was looted . . . And here, Jose felt sure, they had imprisoned Father Pedro!

It had flashed across his mind when Rafael emphasized the word "slime." Dolores had said: "an old cell in the slime way beneath —" and then, when the marquesa stopped her car and spoke to him, Dolores distrusted him again, and led him off the track. Jose took a deep breath, grasped the top rung of the ladder, and descended.

The water, an inch deep, slushed thickly when he hit bottom. He turned and waded down a long corridor, picking his way carefully. The crumbling stone walls were sticky with sweat, and as his light played along them, dark things scurried into the crevices. He moved cautiously for several minutes; then, looking up, he was startled by a

break in the blackness. He was beneath the chateau now, and large chunks of the roof had crumbled away, showing the stars overhead.

A sharp turn, and the corridor was wider here. There was a little recess to his left. Jose flashed his light, to find a small, empty cell, with a ruined grilled iron door. Even more of the roof had fallen away here, and so Jose, his eyes fairly accustomed now to the gloom, snapped off his light.

He felt his way on, the silence of the damp passage, of the chateau walls that rose above it, broken only by the whispering water disturbed by his feet, beginning to weigh on him. He ran his hands along the walls to keep to his way, until the touch of something slimy made him draw quickly back. Then he stopped.

He had almost touched it — the form of a tall human being. He could just make out the dark face and broad shoulders, glinting in the night light.

He stood a moment, unable to move, gazing up. Then, with tense fingers, he drew his gun.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

He held his finger on the trigger, ready for the slightest move. But the figure did not stir. Black, fathomless eyes seemed to gaze steadily down into Jose's. Jose jerked his flash from his pocket and snapped it on.

A Virgin, made of iron, rose beside him, staring with sightless eyes and grim, broken mouth before her. Jose touched the figure, and slowly the front swung open, revealing the spikes behind the eyes to be driven into human eyes, the spikes to sink into the breasts and other parts of the victim's body. At the bottom was a little pile of dust that might once have been bones. Jose snapped off the torch and moved on.

His heart was thumping now, his feet slushed noisily, as he fought back a hysterical passion to run from this house of the Valeras. He was hurrying now. He went twenty or thirty feet, slipped, and jumped up again. He ran on and crashed against a barred door. With trembling fingers, he lit his flashlight again.

For a moment he thought a ghost stared at him. Then, his head clearing, he let out a shout.

"*Father Pedro!*"

The old man, standing behind bars that faced the corridor,

squinted like an animal, and drew back. With nervous fingers, Jose found the key and shoved it in the lock.

"Father Pedro!" he cried breathlessly, as he pulled the door open; "I've come to release you, Father! I've come to let you out!"

The priest opened his eyes. But he did not move. He gazed straight before him, saying nothing.

Jose's hand reached out to touch him.

"Father! Do you hear me? You're free! You're free, Father!" He stopped; drew back, horror rising again in him. For the old man remained motionless, neither seeing nor hearing. *Virgen santisima*, had they driven him mad down here? "Father!" Jose cried pleadingly, "I'm a friend! Come! You've got to trust me. I'm a friend of yours!"

And then, as the priest still gazed before him, as unhuman as the iron Virgin, Jose made one last attempt.

"See, Father!" he pleaded. "You remember me." He turned the light full on his own face. "I am Jose Aldez!"

Then, slowly, the stony eyes widened. The man's mouth opened, as if at witnessing a miracle. A light of joy came into those eyes, and the priest sank to his knees. Head bowed, his shoulders shook with sobs.

"Thou hast answered me, O Lord," he cried, his voice rasping from disuse, "Thou hast heard me and answered me!"

Jose did not understand, but he did not wait to find out. He stepped inside, and took the arm of the now very human old man. Raising him to his feet, he led him slowly down the corridor; and as the priest tried to compose himself, Jose gently — for all his excitement — tried to find what he knew.

"Then they really burned the church?" Father Pedro asked, his voice still trembling.

"They burned it," Jose answered, low. "And do — do you know who — do you know *anything* about it?" He held his breath.

The old man gazed before him as he dragged on, Jose's arm about him.

"It was for that I was imprisoned," he answered. "It was the work of some madmen who hoped to overthrow our government. And it was done with the knowledge of Father Mario."

Jose stopped. They had reached the little cell at the bend. It was hard for him to breathe.

"Father," he spoke low and hurriedly. "They have invaded our country. They are murdering our people, destroying our cities, all

over Spain! Tonight they are marching from San Sebastian on our village, and right now the whole countryside is packed in the village square, while Father Mario and the others are telling them to help the invaders. Father!" Jose took a deep breath. "Will you come and tell the people who the real murderers are? Will you tell them who burned our church?"

Shoulders bowed, eyes before him, the old priest listened intently to the second account that day of the invasion. For a moment after Jose finished, his expression did not change, as if he had not quite understood. Then, a hard light appeared in his eyes. He straightened, and his feebleness seemed to fall from him.

"Come," he said shortly. "Let us hurry."

But now Jose thrust him back into the cell. He stepped inside himself, drew his gun.

"Be quiet," he whispered.

Around the bend, he could hear the soft sloshing of cautiously approaching feet. He started to snap off his light, but instead, he held it arm's length from his body, his gun trained on the bend.

The feet stopped; came forward a few steps, slowly; stopped again, now right at the corner. Whoever it was knew he had been heard, and was waiting to spring. Jose crouched, his trigger finger tense.

Then his gun went flying from his hand, exploding in the air.

"Son, would you commit mortal sin?" cried the priest, who only now realized what was happening.

Before Jose could answer, a figure sprang into sight. Dropping his torch, Jose sprang at the same time, and clutched Rafael's gun hand at the wrist before he could fire. With the sudden impact, the young officer slipped on the slimy ground and toppled backward. The two crashed to earth, Jose on top.

That lasted only a moment. Rafael dropped his slime-filled gun. With animal quickness, he shot his arms under Jose's, twisted him on his back, and was on his feet. By the time Jose, quick as he was, had risen, Rafael was springing on him, knife in hand.

It was over in a second. Before Jose could regain his balance, the knife was flashing downward. Instinctively, he shut his eyes.

"My son, my son!"

Jose opened his eyes, to see the priest's withered arm before his breast. Leaping to one side, he ran to the cell, where his own gun lay

on slightly higher and comparatively dry ground. He swooped down on it and spun around.

Rafael stood limp, arms at his side, staring at the old priest.

"Father Pedro!" he whispered. "It was *you* down here?"

But Jose stepped forward.

"Drop that knife!" he ordered.

Still staring at the priest, Rafael let fall the knife.

"She told me," he said, jerkily, "there was a criminal here — she would explain . . ."

Jose laughed shortly. Rafael looked at him.

"Father Pedro is the 'criminal'," he said, "because he knows Father Mario and the Fascists burned the church in Morino." Rafael's eyes widened; but Jose jabbed the gun into him.

"Get back!" he snapped; "back in that cell at the end there — where they kept Father Pedro!"

Without a word, Rafael turned and started up the passage, Jose following him. After ten feet, Rafael swung around. Jose's gun shot up.

But Rafael did not move. There was still a puzzled look in his eyes.

"You're going to lock me up? You're not going to shoot me?" he asked, in wonder.

Jose regarded him soberly.

"I should," he said quietly. "I suppose I'm a — a traitor not to." He paused; shook his head. "But I'm not going to, Rafael. Now move fast," he ordered. "I'm in a hurry."

Rafael walked silently to the cell. He stepped inside, seated himself on the lone stool. Then, as Jose turned the key in the lock, he jumped up.

"*Jose! look out — behind you!*"

Jose whirled around, gun up.

He and Captain Montez fired simultaneously. Jose heard the captain's bullet ring against a bar behind him as he saw the man crumple. He turned back to Rafael.

Rafael sat forward, hands folded between his legs. There was a strange look in his eyes. For a moment, the two young men regarded each other.

"Thanks, Rafael," said Jose, at last.

Rafael watched him an instant longer. Then he lowered his eyes and spat on the floor.

Father Pedro was stooping over the dead man when Jose reached him. Blood flowed from the old man's arm, as his fingers moved slowly across the pale, handsome face.

"Father!" Jose cried. "You're wounded! Rafael's knife!"

"It is not serious, my son." A moment longer he knelt, murmuring softly. Then he arose.

Jose pulled up the sleeve of the priest's arm, to find a long, jagged flesh wound below the elbow. Tearing the tail of his shirt, he wrapped it tightly around the cut, while the old man stood rigid, as if imbued with new life.

"Come, son," he said, when Jose had finished. "We must hurry!"

It was with difficulty that Father Pedro was helped up the iron ladder, though with greater ease than Jose had hoped for. They passed the cell of the silent Carlos, and slowly mounted the winding staircase, Jose burning with impatience now. They found the marquesa in the hall, pale, eagerly watching the iron door. When she saw them, she stepped back with a little cry.

"Your servant, Carlos, Señora Marquesa," Jose said, as he passed her, arm around the old man, "is locked in the cell at the foot of the stairs. Rafael Aznar is waiting for you below that." He tossed the keys on the table.

The marquesa looked at them, incredulously; then rushed to the back of the hall.

"Dario!" she screamed, "where are you, Dario? Stop them! Stop them!"

But Dario did not hear her.

Father Mario was bringing the long meeting to a close when Jose, still caked with mud and drying slime, pushed his way, with Father Pedro, out of the dark alley at the foot of the square. It had taken a minute longer to drive around, past the village, to the parish house, and the descent to the lower pump square was a little more difficult. But it was more effective.

"Make way for Father Pedro, please. Make way for Father Pedro." Jose's voice was low, but the effect was electric.

The people around them turned to stare; then pushed back, to give them a wide path. A murmuring spread like a ripple over a calm sea. Their priest, of whose disappearance so many ugly rumors had been spreading, was here!

"Make way for Father Pedro, please!"

As heads turned, a path opened before them. Jose could still hear Father Mario's shrill voice; but the murmur rose steadily, deeper in volume. The voice on the platform stopped.

Jose could see Father Mario peer forward. The rest of the speakers, too, had risen and came to the edge of the platform to look over the heads of the people. In front of Jose, now, the path stretched clear to the stand.

Father Pedro walked steadily, eyes before him, Jose's arm firmly around his waist. Now there was a commotion on the platform, but Jose could hear only the swelling sound around him. He saw Father Mario, transfixed with horror. As they reached the stand and slowly mounted the steps, the murmur in the square mounted to a roar.

On the stand, Jose removed his arm from Father Pedro's waist. The old priest stood erect a moment, gazing down at the shouting crowd, a thousand upturned yellow faces, shimmering in the light of torches, a thousand open mouths, from which came one thunderous voice.

For a full minute, the priest stood motionless. Then, slowly, he raised his right hand, three fingers extended.

The voices died down, like a dying wind. Throughout the square there was utter silence. Then:

"*Pax vobiscum*," said the priest.

As one body, the people sank to their knees.

21. WEAKLY, at first, his voice hoarse from long silence, Father Pedro told his story, while the upturned faces watched, still as statues. But as time passed, his voice rose, until it attained the power of the days when it was the greatest force between Bilbao and San Sebastian. Finally, he pointed to the mass of charred ruins, rising dimly on the hillside.

"Who burned our church?" he cried, and now his voice echoed against the buildings at the far end of the square. "They told you this boy beside me burned it; but I know they lie. *Who burned our church?*" he cried, again. "*Shall I tell you?*"

There was a commotion on the stand. Little Mayor Nardiz jumped to his feet and went bouncing to the front of the platform. Others followed, closing in on the priest.

"Wait!" yelled the mayor. "Do you know who this man is who you think's a priest? Do you know where he's been — and where he's going?"

The crowd was quiet; but Jose could feel tension growing within the square. The answer came from an unexpected source.

"I can tell you who he is. And I can tell you who burned our — your — church!"

The men on the platform swung around. Father Mario stepped beside his vicar.

Jose had earlier noticed the younger priest was more peaked and worn than ever — a great hawk's nose, he thought, planted on a skeleton. Now, as he spoke, Father Mario trembled, as if with fever. His eyes shone, almost with madness.

"I can tell you who he is!" The man's shrill, unhuman voice pierced the silence of the square. "He is a saint out of heaven, whom I have denied and betrayed! He has been locked in a dark cell below the earth, because he strove against the devil! But I have been locked in a darker cell, when I only had to raise my voice to be free! And I can tell you who burned that church, and other churches, and farms, and who murdered young Father Santiago in Andurra!" The priest was no longer with the crowd. His repressed, agonized emotions flooded over, and he found himself in the confessional. "*I* am guilty of burning my church, and *I* am guilty of burning other churches and buildings, and of murder! I did not carry the torch, and I did not hold the knife. But I listened to the men who call themselves Nationalists, the enemies of the people; and I permitted them, in the

beginning, because — I — thought it best — because I — I —" And now he sank to his knees, embraced Father Pedro's legs, and hid his face in the folds of the older priest's cassock. "Father, forgive me," he whispered. "Forgive me, Father."

Father Pedro stooped, put his arm around the other's shoulders.

"Come, my son," he said, raising him.

For the first time, Jose saw the steady drip of blood as it fell from Father Pedro's arm upon the younger priest's shoulder. He stepped forward.

"Father!" he cried, "you're still bleeding! You —"

Father Pedro turned. His face, Jose could see, was whiter than ever, but he smiled. He lifted his dripping arm, and blessed Jose.

"And may God aid you, and all those who are with you," he said.

All but Jose left the platform together — some rather hurriedly. But it was the older priest who helped his curate down the steps.

In the square, there was utter silence, so that the receding steps of the men climbing to the highway echoed sharply. Then, once again, the murmur arose, mounting higher, into a roar. A weight had been lifted from these people's shoulders and soon they were laughing, shouting, clapping, while some danced by themselves — up and down, they couldn't move sideways.

Jose waited another two minutes. Then he raised his hand. Slowly they quieted.

"I'm not going to make a speech," he said. In the silence, he could hear his voice crackle against the walls. "You understand now who your enemy is?"

"*Yes!*" It was one surging roar, that filled the square; then died away, leaving silence again.

"You heard Aznar say the Fascist troops are on their way here. Are they going to get through?"

Again the one, solid voice:

"*No!*"

Jose drew in his breath; gazed at the upturned faces.

"Are we going to run?" he cried, "or are we going to fight?"

A moment's deadly stillness. Then the stentorian shout:

"FIGHT!"

It crashed against the buildings, echoed against the mountainside. As it died away, the windows far overhead still trembled with it.

Out of the confusion, Jose miraculously achieved order in less than

half an hour. Nearly everybody was eager for action; any others slipped quietly away. Sitting on the platform, he hastily formed committees from among those he trusted. The old, the women, and the children, must be evacuated immediately, starting along the Bilbao road, carrying only what was absolutely necessary.

"But we must go, too," he added, "unless we have arms and ammunition. What have we got?"

A few of those who crowded around him said they had guns of various vintages. Jose stood up.

"I think there's more than that in this village," he said sharply. "And some of you know about it! Speak up!"

A moment's silence. Then a young man, who had been among the earliest of the "Nationalist Guards," came sheepishly forward, and told of a large cache in the basement of the village hall behind them. Before he had finished, twenty men and boys were whooping around the corner to the door and despite the shrieking remonstrances of Mayor Nardiz — until a blow knocked him out — they returned laden with rifles, pistols, ammunition, and two machine guns.

Soon, along with the shouts and confusion, sounded an overtone, steady and growing louder: the wails of older women, the whimper of children. They came out of the buildings, burdened with goods, shuffled across the square, and up, to the highway. Jose stopped work to watch them pour out. He never knew there were so many in the village: bent old men and women, some walking with two sticks; women with child; babes in arms; all laden with huge bundles, save those who must carry children or could carry only themselves.

Once, he started forward.

"*Madre mia!*" he called.

She was weighed double under a bundle, and Jose felt a catch in his throat as he saw the sleeve of a ragged coat of his dangling from it. He knew what was inside: her wedding dress, the battered alarm clock, his precious books that so puzzled her. She turned her head at his call. Jose stepped to the edge of the platform.

"*Madre*, throw away that stuff! You'll kill yourself!" he cried.

He couldn't tell if she had heard him. She regarded him a moment, as she might a stranger. Then she turned front, and keeping her place in line, trudged up the path and out of sight.

Angrily, Jose wheeled around, to see Dolores in the square nearby, awkwardly examining a rifle.

"Señora!" he called sharply.

Dolores glanced at him. Her face was pale, but expressionless.

"You haven't time to fool with rifles. Get your things and leave!" he ordered.

Dolores did not answer. A moment she looked unhappily up at him. Then she turned back to the rifle. Another girl stepped forward.

"You think you're sending us girls off?" she cried indignantly. "Hah!" she snorted. "Look at them!" She pointed to where, at the other end of the square, a man was demonstrating the use of a gun to a large group of girls. "Hah! I say!"

Jose shrugged. He dropped in his seat, and then glanced up as a young man approached him. His lips tightened.

Luis Danillo had seen Dolores' face, and had mounted to the platform quietly — and nervously.

"Jose," he began timidly. "About Dolores —"

"Have we time now for a love story?" snarled Jose. "Get down to work — or get along with the old people." He turned back to a map of the lower village he was hastily drawing.

But now Luis grasped his arm.

"Jose!" he said desperately. "You've *got* to hear! One of us may die tonight —"

"Then it won't matter," snapped Jose, shaking himself free. But as he worked, the low, pleading words penetrated: the story of the pretended marriage, to save Dolores' name, and with it the name of the Loyalist's cause. They did not dare to explain before the others, and then they believed Jose had turned Fascist. Jose raised his head as he listened.

"Back on the road, when the marquesa spoke to you, Dolores was suspicious of you again just for a minute. Then she called to you like her heart would break." The low voice stopped. There was a pause. Then a timid touch on Jose's sleeve. "Jose."

Jose looked around at Luis. Luis' eyes were miserable.

"Jose," he said, very low, "we — are not married."

"Not married?" repeated Jose.

Luis lowered his eyes.

"I said — don't you understand?" he whispered, "we are not — married — in any way."

Jose swung around. He grasped Luis' wrist, pressed it. He jumped up, threw his arm around Luis' shoulder and squeezed him. Then he

stepped to the front of the platform and cupped his hand over his mouth. "You men of the defense committee, come up here—*now!*"

Arms and rounds of ammunition were passed out, and some men and all the girls were detailed to strategic windows in the high tenements around the pump square, with orders to be alert for a rocket signal, when they should come down and retreat to a last defense line. The two machine guns were placed at the foot of the two alleys that led down into the pump square, behind barricades of mattresses saturated with water. There was but one more preparation, for which Jose was thankful, since morning was not far away.

Dynamite had been found in the basement of the hall, and with three experienced men, Jose started along the highway in the direction of San Sebastian. They halted at a spot beyond the village.

Here the ledge rose, sheer and unscalable for another kilometer; it dropped, on the other side, almost as straight, to a small sand bar beyond the harbor, where, in the silence, they could hear, with measured beat, the dull thud of the waves against the cliff.

Picks under their arms, the dynamiters with difficulty climbed down and planted their sticks with long fuses. Jose waited above, striding nervously back and forth, until, singly, the dark figures reappeared and clambered up to the road.

Now, one of them cried out in horror, pointing up the road. A small automobile had turned the corner and was rattling toward them. "Go back!" they yelled, "go back!"

The driver probably could not see them, despite the mass of stars that swept down to the sea. He came on; reached the danger spot; passed it. There was a roar.

The world seemed to rise with a thunder of protest, and the three men staggered back. They saw the car lift up a couple of feet; then they covered their faces against a shower of dirt.

When they removed their hands, the car had struck ground and was rattling on. It drew up beside them, its top covered with rocks. The young driver got out, ashen, but grinning. He stooped and wiggled the tin fender. "You greet people here," he said

Jose explained it was against the coming of the Legionnaires. The young man nodded. "I know and I hope they appreciate it as much as I did." He tooted his horn to see if it still worked, and then looked around again. "They've reached the outskirts of Andurra," he said, "and will be here in half an hour."

22.

THE Marquesa de Valera paced the drawing room floor nervously. Now and then she ran to the telephone to call some sympathizer in or near Morino. From Vieira, the manufacturer, she learned of Father Mario's confession and the changed temper of the village; but after that, there was little to be learned, or else no answer at all.

"The fools have gone mad!" she muttered, as she paced back and forth, beating her fist into her open palm. "It's lucky the troops are coming to teach them a lesson!"

Rafael sat on the divan, folded hands between his legs. He was filthy with slime, but he had not bothered to clean himself. He seldom spoke; but now he looked up.

"And you knew who did it," he asked again, "and yet you kept Father Pedro in that stinking cell, because he knew too?"

The marquesa swung angrily on him.

"I said 'yes,' you fool," she replied, in a tense voice. "Do you think we could let him loose to betray us to those dolts?"

Rafael, who had dropped his head, looked up again.

"I'm one of those dolts," he said.

She stopped in front of him; stamped her foot.

"Then why don't you go join them?" she snapped. "Why don't you become a —" she sneered, "a 'Loyalist'?"

He shook his head.

"It's too late, now," he murmured. "I've chosen my side."

"You're an idiot!" She swung away from him and walked to the window.

Time passed. Now and then Rafael reached for the decanter beside him and poured himself a drink of cognac. Every half hour the marquesa hurried to the telephone. Once she had to wait several minutes before central, located just beyond Morino, responded.

"What's the matter?" the marquesa demanded. "What's wrong with the service?"

"There will be no more service for some time, señora," answered the voice.

"Why?" snapped the marquesa. "Until when?"

"Until after the war, señora." The voice clicked off.

An hour later, a thud, like distant thunder, made the villa vibrate. Slowly, simultaneously, the many lights in the room died down,

leaving thin, glowing wires, which finally disappeared. The Marquesa de Valera jumped up, her hand to her breast.

"It's — they must have come!" she gasped. "Rafael! I can't wait here in the dark like this —" She ran to the door. "Carlos! Dario!" she screamed. "— Why haven't those others come back?" she complained. "Have they deserted me for the *canaille?* — Carlos! Candles, Carlos! Immediately!" She turned back. "Rafael!" she called again to him in the darkness. "I can't wait here doing nothing! We'll drive to Morino! You can join your troops and help put this — this thing down . . . and if — if —" her voice dropped to a whisper, "if they haven't . . ."

She heard Rafael slowly rise.

"I'll join my troops, but not in Morino," he said. "I won't fight in Morino."

Carlos came in, bearing a candle in a trembling hand.

"Where's Dario?" his mistress demanded.

"Señora Marquesa —" his eyes were frightened, "he's gone — I think to join those others."

The marquesa stood very still, her face very white.

"If they do win . . ." she was debating with herself, "and they come down this road —" She whirled around. "Carlos! We're getting the silver, my jewelry, everything of value we can, and packing them in Señor Aznar's car!"

A little more than an hour later, with Rafael at the wheel they were driving down the road for Morino. Carlos had been left behind, as there was not enough room both for him and the marquesa's valuables. They could not drive fast, because of a line of phantom figures, bent low under huge bundles, moving slowly past with a subdued chant of misery.

"*Canaille*," muttered the marquesa again.

Rafael said nothing. As they neared the village, he heard the sharp fusillade of guns. The square, when they passed above it, was dark and empty; the constant crackle, the *rat-a-tat* of machine guns, came from the foot of the alleys beyond.

A figure catapulted out of an alley. Rafael slowed the car and peered out. It seemed to be a girl.

She reached the middle of the square, then sank to her knees. If she made any sound, he could not hear it above the firing.

The girl shuddered, then pitched on her face. Rafael caught his

breath. Was it some one he knew? *Could it be* —? He started to draw up, then hesitated. Even in her death agony, he thought, a leaden weight within him, *she* would not want him with her.

"Drive on, imbecile! Do you want to be shot?"

They swung around on the highway, passed the church, and a moment later Rafael clamped hard on the brakes. The two sat gazing into the chasm below them. For a minute the marquesa was motionless, breathing heavily. Then she grasped his arm.

"Turn!" she commanded. "Turn and drive back, quick!"

"Into their arms, in Bilbao?" Rafael asked dully.

"No, no!" she answered. "I have a better idea! One that will save us, if these dogs win!"

Rafael turned the car and started back. Half an hour later they swung into the drive of Señor Muelda's villa, two kilometers beyond the marquesa's home. Señor Muelda, a stout young man, who had bought a plane and taken up flying early in the summer, listened to the marquesa's low, rapid explanation.

"But Señora Marquesa," he protested; "I'm really not a full-fledged pilot yet. I — I was planning to offer my services to General Franco as soon as I felt sufficiently proficient."

But the marquesa, hysterical now, overwhelmed him. San Sebastian was not half an hour's flight away. Surely he could trust himself to pilot them there, where they could stay until they saw how things turned out! The man capitulated, turned, and silently led them to the hangar.

Twenty minutes later, the small cabin plane rolled out, sped to the end of the field under the lone searchlight; turned back; and a moment later, rose from the ground, over the trees, over the villa, heading east.

The advance contingent of Legionnaires had expected an unresisted march to the outskirts of Bilbao itself, and the great gap in the highway brought them up short. The mountainside was too precipitous to scale here, and the drop below was nearly as steep. But these men were hardened soldiers; and in half an hour they had descended the almost perpendicular cliff, and were making their way in good form along the narrow beach to the Morino quays. From here, alert, rifles ready, they moved slowly up the two narrow black alleys, between deserted tenements, toward the main square and the

highway. In the pump square, at the head of the lower alleys, they met a fusillade that left their van a heap of writhing bodies.

Jose had evacuated everything below the pump square, wrecking the stairways of the tenements on the lower side. In the alleys at the head of that square, behind barricades, were the two machine guns and the pick of the male youth. In the tenement windows on three sides, the older men and girls peered out, guns pointing steadily through an eternal silence at the empty blackness of the lower alleys. Then, at last, though it had seemed impossible, the long awaited, stirring life dimly appeared there, and a terrible blast from three sides greeted it.

The lone torch, set up as a beacon in the small square, shivered and plunged into extinction, and as the crash vibrated and died away, left darkness and awful silence. Minutes passed, as the defenders at the machine guns strained forward to pierce the darkness. Nervousness mounted, alternating with spurts of mad hope that the invaders had been repulsed. Then, all at once, with inhuman shrieks, the Legionnaires were in the square, slinging grenades, bearing down with fixed bayonets.

Once more burning lead jetted down from the windows, where the defenders knew their bullets could find only the enemy. As the sound of the volley died away, low moans with an occasional scream of agony, rose to replace it. But though the mercenaries again retreated to the lower alleys, a constant fire of machine guns, grenades, rifles, started from behind the protection of their own heaped up dead.

Jose, in the east alley, knew that holding out was a matter of minutes; already he had felt an unknown friend slump at his feet, had heard a feeble groan behind him. And now a new aid to the enemy appeared: a pale streak of light rose, widening above the hillside. Feeling on the ground beside him, he found one of the skyrockets, relic from gay fiesta days that seemed so long ago. He lighted the fuse and held it up, toward the square. In a moment, bright stars were soaring above the spurting gunfire.

There was no apparent change in the now silent tenements. But Jose knew that in obedience to his signal the defenders in the east and west flanking buildings were quietly feeling their way down the stairs, loaded with arms and ammunition. Jose ran up to the main square.

It was dark and comparatively quiet here. But he waited and in a

few minutes he heard doors opening and the sound of feet as the evacuating villagers now appeared on the main square. Jose called, as low as he could above the gunfire.

"Diego?"

"Here I am." A hand touched his sleeve.

"You know where to take them?"

The other grunted.

"Below the Convent of the Sacred Heart." This spot, two kilometers away, the highest point on the Bilbao road, was beneath a steep terrace on which they could take a last, desperate stand.

"Good. Make it fast. We'll join you soon."

"And if the help you called from Bilbao doesn't come in time — ?" muttered Diego.

"Then our kids can have a holiday in our honor. Now start!"

He stood a moment, listening to the low orders, to the disorganized sound of the feet of about forty silent people, moving up the square on both sides of him. When he returned to the pump square, he saw the evacuation was just in time. Already the mercenaries had succeeded in firing a west flanking tenement and flames were curling up its side. While, despite the wrecked stairways in the lower buildings, snipers had succeeded in reaching the windows of the first floor of one.

Now, in the alley below him, behind the barricade of corpses, he could see the shadowy faces, the shining eyes; he could see the spurting guns, gleaming in the firelight, the grotesque jerking arms, followed by the crash of grenades. For all the protection of barricades and nearby doorways, the heap of squirming or motionless bodies around him was growing. Once more he sent up a rocket, this a signal to the tenements above them. Then he dashed back to the main square.

As the villagers poured out, the defenders of the west alley, too, came stumbling into the square.

"The fire!" gasped one, his face red and pouring sweat, "it's spreading up the alley!"

Jose ran across the square and looked down. The alley was a mass of flames, untenable — and impassable. He whirled around, shot out orders to the evacuators who crowded around, their faces now gray and drawn in the dead light.

"Join the others by the Convent of the Sacred Heart!" he shouted

to their leader. Then he turned back to the men from the alley. "You know what to do?" he barked out.

"*Si*," drawled a light-haired boy, scratching his back with the butt of his gun. "Line up ten feet apart above the road and give a salute to Franco when they pass."

"Then do it!" Jose ran down the east alley.

The Legionnaires, he realized, sensing the diminishing gunfire, were making ready for a final attack.

"We're retreating!" he shouted. "You know your orders. Take your wounded up to cover, and move fast! There's no protection in your rear!"

"You've got protection in your rear."

Jose turned. Luis Danillo was manipulating the burning machine gun, eyes straining forward.

"You're coming along!" Jose snapped.

"And get shot in the back, all of us?" Luis did not cease his deadly motion. "*Anda!*"

Jose hesitated; then saw the Legionnaires leap over their limp barricade. He pressed Luis' arm and started after his men, who were halfway up the alley.

"*Jose.*"

He could just hear the call above the uproar. He swung back. Luis did not move his eyes from his approaching target.

"*Yes, Luis! I'm here.*"

"*Be happy.*"

Jose, unable for a moment to stir, stared at the other's back, his moving arms. Then he turned and flew up the alley, after his men.

Through a pass, all but invisible, they made their way up the precipitous mountainside; and here, some twenty feet above the highway, they took their places, approximately ten feet apart, behind trees, bushes, and rocks, and waited for the advancing enemy.

When the first of the sun-blackened mercenaries were met by the sporadic fire, they stopped in confusion and looked wildly around in the dim light for means of climbing up to the snipers; then seeing only the unscalable wall, they continued doggedly, whipped on by the desperate fatalism of men whose only training has been for warfare. Above, the protected young Spaniards fired leisurely at the dark figures. When the main body of the mercenaries had passed the last of the snipers, the latter would rise and lope through the brush to the

head of his band, and there settle himself to await the harassed enemy again.

Jose had hurried on ahead of his shock troops, and at last, as a warm flush of red appeared in the low sky before him, he rounded the bend where the mass of older men and girls waited, guns poised with nervous tension. A forlorn cheer greeted him.

He called his chosen leaders to him — and then saw solemn brown eyes watching him across the road. His own eyes all at once filled with tears.

"You too, Dolores," he said, huskily, holding out his hand.

She came toward him, trailing her gun, still soberly watching him.

"Luis?" she asked, in a whisper, when she reached him.

He put his arm around her, drew her to him.

"— wants us to be happy," he finished, low. Then he jerked up his head at the sound of gunfire, perhaps a kilometer away, approaching them. He wheeled around to his leaders.

"Listen!" he commanded. "Here's the plan!" Then he stopped.

From above came a sudden crackling, followed by the *ping!* of bullets landing just beyond them.

23.

THE nerve-racked crowd became a maddened mob, running up and down the road, shrieking, throwing their guns away. Jose strained his voice shouting and a second volley rained down on them. A thin-faced woman stood a moment with quivering lips, and then slumped at Jose's feet; a boy, scarcely in his teens, lay writhing in the road.

Paralyzed, the crowd quieted, gazed at their dead in stunned silence. Jose cupped his hands over his mouth.

"Back around the bend!" he yelled. "Keep close to the bank!"

Cowed, the people trotted around the bend, hugging the embankment. One husky woman darted out, scooped the wounded boy up, then ran back to the retreating throng. The dead woman remained outstretched in the middle of the road.

Jose glanced up before darting to protection. The shooting came from behind a thick hedge, twenty feet above him — a hedge in front of the Convent of the Sacred Heart. It was here he had planned to make the last stand. He joined the huddled group around the corner and called a dozen men to him. The fire from the convent had ceased, but the crackling down the highway in the direction of Morino was becoming louder. Hurriedly, Jose clipped out his orders.

Jose, with ten men, was to sneak past the convent to a narrow gully, one hundred yards beyond, and climb up to the embankment. Diego remained in charge behind and with a few men he was to find whatever protection possible and keep up a constant fire to distract the attention of the enemy above.

"Not too constant, though," Jose added ruefully, remembering the fast-dwindling ammunition.

Diego, who knew of the gully, was to wait — listening to the approaching gunfire — as long as he considered advisable, and then hurry the main body of girls and older men around to join Jose.

Jose raised his hand in silent signal to his men; then felt a touch on his arm.

It was Dolores. She clutched her rifle tightly, and as she looked at him, she tried to keep her lip from trembling.

"I'm going with you, Jose?" It was half a question.

Jose did not hesitate. He pressed her wrist.

"From now on — it's together?"

"From now on," she whispered.

Single file, they noiselessly passed beneath the convent, hugging

the bank, just as the aimless fire of Diego's men commenced. They hurried on, and reached the brush-choked gully, wide enough only for one to pass at a time.

It rose, gradually, up a dried, stone-filled stream bed, reaching the upper level fifty feet back. Here they turned toward the convent, tearing their way through the brush, over the uneven ground, as quietly as possible, rushing forward at the sound of a volley, moving with infinite care during intervening silence. Jose was the first to step into the opening at the rear of the convent.

It was a long, low building of rough stone and narrow barred windows, set high. Beyond rose a small church, its base of stone, its upper half and squat belfry of brown-stained wood. Jose advanced a few steps across the lawn and stopped. Seated on the single stone step, before a narrow door of thick wood, was a nun, head sunk low, white arms hanging limp beyond her knees.

At a crackling in the brush behind Jose, she shot up her head. Her blanched face regarded him, and the men crowded behind him, with stony horror. Then she jumped up and threw wide her arms to bar the door.

"You are not going in," she declared in a low voice as Jose ran up.

"I'm sorry, *hermana*," Jose's voice was equally low, "you must stand aside."

"You are not going in." The nun was calm now. "You must kill me first."

Jose reached for her arm.

"Stand aside," he ordered, "in the name of the Republic!"

And then her expression changed. Her eyes opened wide in astonishment, then moved across the faces behind Jose. When they reached Dolores, a smile appeared on her pale lips and her eyes lighted. She stepped aside.

"Enter," she whispered, "in the name of the Republic — and in the name of God!"

The door, usually heavily barred, was unlocked. Still single file, they tiptoed in, Jose in the lead. There was a short, dark corridor, and another door. When Jose opened it, he found himself in the cool patio.

The sound of the rifle fire was sharper now. In a corner to his right, the nuns were crowded together, pale and fearful, yet with rebellion in their eyes. Before them, the Mother Superior strode ma-

jestically back and forth, her ascetic face lined deep with authority, while she poured down on the sisters low, vindictive words. She turned sharply as Jose entered.

"How dare you enter this house of God?" she demanded.

Without answering, Jose started running across the patio, rifle in hand. He heard the Mother Superior command him to halt, heard the thud of the file of running feet behind him. He reached the opposite door and passed through the small offices to the heavy door leading to the terrace. He opened it, cautiously at first, then flung it wide.

It flashed across him how protected they must feel behind these locked doors. Twelve or fifteen of them — a couple of landed gentry, their servants, and two or three old peasants — lay comfortably outstretched, guns aimed through the thick hedge before them. A volley had been commanded and fired as Jose stepped out and when the roar died away, most of his men had slipped out behind him.

"Bueno! *Drop your guns!*"

The men on the ground whirled around in confusion. Two of them made the fatal mistake of raising their rifles as they turned. The crack of half a dozen guns behind Jose left three men writhing, one, motionless.

Jose shouted orders. The wounded were to be left in care of the sisters; the others locked up. He ran to the hedge and pushed his way to the edge of the cliff. The fire of the approaching Legionnaires sounded dangerously close.

"All right, Diego! Bring them up, quick!"

"*Gracias a Dios!*" called back a voice. "I was just starting them off!"

Behind the hedge again, Jose looked down at the large supply of ammunition beside the deserted guns. He strode into the patio.

"Where did these men get their ammunition?" he asked the Mother Superior.

The woman, though pale now, was still firm-lipped. She regarded him scornfully.

"Should I, a woman, and a servant of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, know such things?"

But a slender young nun stepped out from the huddled group.

"She does, though, señor!" she said timidly. When the Mother Superior turned on her furiously, she dropped her eyes, and then

raised them boldly again. "They've been hidden for some time, lots and lots of those things, in the basement of the church!"

As the thud of the feet of scores of villagers running up to the gully reached them from the highway, Jose led half his men into the church and down into the cool, dark vaults. Here, in neat piles, were boxes of rifles, cases of ammunition, machine guns, grenades. Bringing up a quantity of grenades and ammunition, Jose settled his men in the positions behind the hedge lately occupied by the enemy.

The first of the Legionnaires, now a hectic and unformed body, appeared around the bend shortly before the villagers started trickling into the convent from the rear. The mercenaries were stopped by a blast of grenades and fell back until pushed on again by their harassed comrades behind. While the women, under Dolores, lugged up machine guns and cases of ammunition, Jose formed the reunited men into a compact body, outstretched and kneeling, behind the hedge.

It was all over — for the time, anyhow. Whipped on by their officers, the ever-growing body of mercenaries would stumble on a few feet; and then, under the rain of fire from the terrace, fall back in panic. The ground, from the highway to the sea, was less precipitous here, and bellowing and cursing the officers forced a half-hearted attempt to skirt the road by the water's edge. But farflung machine gun fire raked the advance, letting only a few through to be stranded beyond the convent, and sending most scurrying back to the highway behind the bend.

As the villagers lay waiting, hearing the hoarse commands and the protesting murmurs around the bend, Jose slumped in a momentary relaxation. There was only one vital question now: would reinforcements first come to them from the west, or for the Fascists from the east? He turned with a smile to Diego who stood beside him, and his smile disappeared.

"You're wounded!" he said, looking at his friend's arm streaming blood. "You got that *up here?*" he asked, incredulously.

Diego shook his head.

"No. It isn't much. I got it on the highway. There're snipers in the church." He jerked his head toward the squat belfry, whose top just peered above the roof of the convent. "Lucky they can't reach us here," he added.

A man kneeling before them turned around.

"Let's burn the thing!" he shouted. "Let's burn the whole damned church!"

There were cries of approval. Forgetting their job, forgetting even that only the upper section of the building was of wood, the men dropped their guns and sat up, clapping one another on the back, waving their fists, shouting for destruction. These people, who such a short time before, felt the church to be their haven, now saw it only as a stronghold of their enemy, a symbol of the forces that left their dead strewn along the alleys and squares of the flaming furnace of Morino. Jose shouted, waved his arms. But what finally quieted them was the sound of a volley from around the bend. They turned to the hedge, alert.

It was only a matter of minutes before they heard a crackling of another sort. Whether a candle had been dislodged in the old, sun-heated building, they never learned; but, though the church could hardly be seen from here, it was easy enough to see the flames that licked around the belfry and leaped into the sky. The Legionnaires, from the other side, had fired their Parthian shot. Jose barked out orders.

"Stay in position! The first one that moves —" But he did not have to finish his threat. Outstretched and kneeling, the motionless men were gazing down the empty road.

Jose glanced up at the flames. There was no hope of saving the snipers, he realized; and there was no danger to the foundation of the church or the convent.

Weary now, he stepped back and leaned against the convent wall. Dolores stood nearby. He drew her gently to him and put his arm around her.

While the hot sun rose like blood, while the flames lifted steadily into the sultry sky, the men lay and knelt, eyes front, listening as he spoke to them.

Rafael, hunched in the rear of the little cabin plane, could see nothing, neither the world around him, nor the Marquesa de Valera, nor the pilot. In a world in which all that was real was the steady roar surrounding him, they were bounced about in a titanic void, now suddenly dropping, now catching hold of nothing tangible, and rising again. Then, all at once, a streak of solid brilliance pierced the

blackness, swept majestically across the heavens, and closed on them. As Rafael began to relax, the plane shivered.

"*They're firing on us!*" Señor Muelda's shriek was far away. "*The plane hasn't any insignia — and we're coming from the west!*"

They leaped upward, up, up. The misty light that surrounded them faded, and below, the powerful beam became a mere thread of gold. And still they rose. *Virgen Santa!* Were they climbing to God Himself?

Rafael heard the whisper of the marquesa's protest. But the plane shot on eastward, and the gold thread disappeared behind them. He leaned forward to shout to the pilot to return; but, though he could see nothing, the tenseness of the hysterical novice was communicated to the plane itself, and Rafael forced himself back, clenching shut his fists and eyes, waiting for the crash into eternity, above or below. Every few minutes — or hours — he opened his eyes to the rushing blackness, then closed them again. And then, at last, he opened them to the pale streak of dawn, directly ahead.

As the light strengthened, the plane slowly sank. Now he could make out Muelda's back, as he peered at some instrument.

" . . . *gasoline*," he heard him shout.

The plane dropped lower. Now a brush of reflected light below told of the existence of dear, solid earth. Rafael glanced to his left, and saw startling, gigantic stripes of white on black, where mountains towered nearby.

The plane dropped lower; circled. The earth itself appeared a smooth, corn-colored terrace. They circled ever lower, in narrowing range and the smooth terrace became humps of light and shadows. Now they were above rough hillocks that lifted to catch them. As Rafael put out his hand to protest, the plane touched one with a terrific jar; bounced up; then struck again, bouncing, twisting, swaying; slowing, finally, to a halt.

They all lay a few moments as they had fallen. But the plane had landed upright, and one by one they pulled themselves back to their seats. They sat for minutes, ashen and inert. Then, slowly, the marquesa turned her head.

"Where are we?" she whispered.

Muelda was again gazing at an instrument. He did not look up.

"If this is right . . . " It was hard for him to speak, "we're in the Communist lines again . . . over a hundred kilometers inside."

They sat on in silence, as if waiting for something to happen.

"Can the plane go?" asked the marquesa, at last.

"No."

Rafael pulled himself to his feet, shoulders hunched under the low roof. He cleared his throat.

"I'll reconnoiter," he said. He squeezed past the marquesa to the low door. As he stepped outside, she turned to look at him.

"You?" She was suddenly alert. "You reconnoiter in that uniform?" Her voice rose. "You think we want to get slaughtered along with you? We, who are non-combatants?"

Rafael listened in astonishment. Then he pulled off his coat and tossed it into the plane. But the marquesa snatched it up and threw it back to him.

"You'd have us killed, would you?" she screamed. The low, modulated voice was gone; it was a shrill cackle now. "You'd run away, like the oaf you are, and leave me and a gentleman to be murdered for you?"

Rafael did not answer. He picked up the coat and started across the humpy field. As he walked, the woman's screams of accusation, with the querulous voice of the pilot added now, followed him out of hearing.

He reached a patch of woodland, and buried his coat under a heap of dried leaves. He looked down at his breeches, but there was nothing to be done about them. He plodded on. The sun rose as he stepped into a level field again.

He tried to walk due west, paralleling the mountains. He was vague as to where he was going; he only sensed that safety lay in that direction. Sometimes he saw peasants working in the distance, and then he would turn away from them. The sun, mounting higher, heated his back, and sweat trickled down his neck. He thought: if only I could find a drink, a clear, running stream! His saliva thickened at the picture.

He reached a cart road, bordered beyond by thick evergreens. Just inside their protection, he threw himself down, and tried to think. Now, for the first time, he thought of the mountain passes, and France and safety beyond. He glanced northward — and jumped up and drew back into the woods. Seven or eight men were straggling down the sloping road that led from the jagged mountains.

Like an animal, Rafael watched them through the trees, slipping

back foot by foot as they approached. Then, when they were twenty feet away, he stood listening.

Their voices carried clear, and they were foreign voices. More, the man in the lead stopped, not far from Rafael, to lift a canteen to his lips. His saliva thick again, Rafael decided to chance it. He strolled out, reaching the road just ahead of them.

The foremost lowered his canteen and brought up his hand in a half salute. The others halted behind him.

"*Salud!*" said the first.

"*Salud!*" replied Rafael.

The others, greeting him, moved closer.

"Bolmaña?" questioned one, pointing ahead.

Rafael had never heard of the town.

"*Si!*" He smiled, assuringly.

There was a pause. Then one threw himself in the shade and wiped his streaming forehead. The others followed, and finally Rafael sat down gingerly, eyes on the man with the canteen. The men, all young, were watching him with eager curiosity.

The man beside Rafael turned to a companion and said something in a strange tongue. His companion edged forward to see Rafael better. He was a slender young man, with blond, wavy hair.

"*Habla . . . usted . . . español?*" he asked meticulously.

Most of the strangers roared with laughter. Even Rafael smiled.

"Yes," he replied, "I speak Spanish." He started to ask for a drink, and hesitated. In his tortured state of mind, he was sure they would suspect him.

The other grinned, flushing.

"Well," he said, his speech was slow, with academic correctness, but atrocious pronunciation. "Well, you see you are the first person we've met, so I didn't know."

Rafael's eyes widened.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

The young man jerked his head toward the mountains.

"From France," he replied.

"From France?" Rafael looked at the blond hair. "You are a Frenchman?"

The other, edging up to Rafael, shook his head.

"I am an American — a North American," he added hastily.

"Yes?" Rafael stared. "You are North Americans?"

The blond boy shook his head again.

"Only three of us." He indicated two others. "He's a German," he went on, pointing, "and those three are French. That fellow over there —" He pointed to a small, dark young man at the end, "he's a —" he stopped; scratched his head, grinning, and questioned another American. The second American questioned a Frenchman, and finally the answer came back. "He's a Croatian," explained the blond young man, "from Croatia," he added simply.

For the moment, Rafael forgot his thirst in his surprise.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "Don't you know there's a war going on?"

The American rocked back with laughter. He said something, and his two compatriots burst out laughing. When he could stop, the second American spoke, and the three Frenchmen commenced to laugh. One of the Frenchmen made strange, guttural sounds, and the German joined them. The Croatian smiled sympathetically. Suddenly Rafael understood.

"I know!" he said. "You're sent over by your governments, like the Italians and Germans in our —" he caught himself, "our enemy's army," he finished.

It was the American's turn to stare.

"*Sent* over?" he said. "Why, all of us had a damned hard time *getting* over!" He glanced up at the sky. "I'm selling tacks on commission, right now, in Paris," he said.

"But the American Government and the French aren't sending you?" Rafael insisted. "You didn't *have* to come? — Or are they paying you a lot of money?"

The American burst out laughing again.

"Sure, we'll get a lot of money!" he said. "We'll get —" he questioned a friend, "we'll get, maybe, one peseta a day," he told Rafael.

A curious feeling stirred in Rafael. He hesitated.

"Then . . . *why?*" he asked, at last.

The American looked at him, gravely wondering. The others, too, watched him, not smiling now, though they could only sense the discussion.

"Why?" he repeated slowly. "You're a Spaniard, and you ask that?"

Rafael was gazing at his hand that rested in the dirt.

"You have come . . . to fight for Spain?" he asked, in a low voice.

There was a pause. The American said something in a puzzled tone to a friend. Then he turned back, rising to his knees.

"We've come to try to help you Spaniards, sure," he said. "We know you're fighting, and fighting like hell. But we've come for a lot more than that!" Behind him the others were pulling themselves to their feet. The young man himself stood up, and looking at Rafael, he suddenly started speaking in jerky, bad Spanish. "Do you think Mussolini and Hitler and the others are the only ones who know what this is all about?" he shouted. "We people know, too! We know it's the beginning of the end — and we're coming here from all over the world to fight it out!"

Rafael raised himself on his elbow and looked at them standing together. He was very tired, heavy with loneliness. For one vivid second, he saw Jose's face.

"You are all friends?" he asked, looking slowly from one to another.

The American's face cleared. He shook his head.

"We never met before, most of us. I and my American friends came across the Atlantic together. We were sent to a village the other side of the mountains where we met people who gave us directions how to cross, and how to get to Bolmaña. We met the German fellow, who started with us." He nodded toward the tow-headed young man. Then he smiled. "You see," he said, "we had to slip by the patrol at night — and we did, coming along a little path. Then," he went on, "at daybreak, we met another path —" he pointed back, "where we'd planned to join these chaps who had started from another point." For a moment he gazed at the towering mountain wall, so irrevocably crossed, then he swung back. "Now we're all friends," he said, with a laugh.

The rest were drawing away. But the foremost, a Frenchman, stopped, and pulled his canteen from his shoulder. He raised it to Rafael.

"*À l'Espagne!*" he said, and drank.

Rafael watched; listened to the wine gurgle down the man's throat. His own thirst had died. He now felt neither thirst, fatigue, nor fear. Three words burned in him, uttered by this stranger who had crossed the mountains: *À l'Espagne!* The Frenchman passed the canteen to his neighbor. The man raised it, before drinking, to Rafael.

"*To Spain!*" he said, in Spanish.

One by one, they saluted and drank, until the blond American, nearest Rafael, lowered the canteen and held it out to him.

"*Gracias*," he muttered, "I'm not thirsty."

Not caring whether he was seen, whether he lived or died, he lay outstretched on his side, and watched the eight young men disappear down the long road.

"So you wanted to burn the church," said Jose. "I know how you feel. You think of these fellows, hacking and burning and shooting, when all you want is to live peacefully, and you think of some of the priests and this Mother Superior here who helped them at it; so you want to run wild like them, and burn and hack and shoot anything you see. But what good would that do?" His arm around Dolores, he ran his eyes slowly along the lines of kneeling and outstretched men. No one answered; no one turned.

"I've read a lot of history," Jose said, "and I know what happened to people who suddenly turned on the men who were torturing them, when those people didn't have any plans or leaders or knowledge of what it was all about. They hit back blindly, like mad men and then they cooled down. And when they'd cooled, the men who had all the money and the power wiped them up.

"When a church building stands in your way in battle, you've got to burn it; and if a priest or anybody else does the same, you've got to kill him. But get this straight! It isn't the church building, or even the priests, or any particular man who's your real enemy.

"We, we're not fighting just people. We're fighting *for* something!" And now, unconsciously, his arm tightened around Dolores. "We're fighting for liberty, for a decent life; and knowing just that will make us lick the Fascists and their Moors and Germans and Italians, and anybody else they bring around! Even if they had won out here today; even if they —" he hesitated, lowering his voice: "even if they should capture Bilbao and do all the terrible things to the people there they've done in other places they've captured — could that mean we're licked, so long as there's *one* Spaniard left who is willing to fight for a better world?

"For that's what we're really fighting for: not only for a better Spain, but for a better world! We Spaniards are a wall of men, standing against the attack of all the forces of darkness!"

Far to the east appeared a dozen gnatlike forms, rising in the sky with the faint drone of insects, drawing nearer.

Jose did not see them at first. He was looking out across the Bay of Biscay, gleaming black under the high sun, thinking of the countries that lay beyond. "Can't you realize that?" he thought. "Your governments and owners do. Why don't you rise up and force them to stop murdering us? Why don't you send us help — food for our children, guns to fight our enemies, WHY DON'T YOU YOURSELVES COME — ?"

The droning grew steadily louder. The black planes took on shape against the sultry sky; grew larger and blacker. Silent, tense, the villagers watched them approach, undeviating, in perfect formation, in the form of a cross.

* * *

24. KNAPSACKS on back, the eight young foreigners, after leaving Rafael, trudged along the narrow, dusty path. When the sun was overhead, they met a wider road. Here they stopped and waited. Half an hour later, they saw a group of men approaching along the other road, toting knapsacks like themselves. They came up, shouting.

There were ten in this group, mostly young Englishmen. Timed in their departure back in France, they had crossed the mountains at various points farther east, and met where their paths joined on the Spanish side.

Tired, sweating, the eighteen young men moved on between the level fields. As the sun started downward, a low, white town rose before them, and as they saw the town, they saw a file of men approaching on their right.

They joined their forces at the edge of the village. They shouted greetings in half a dozen tongues. No longer tired, they quickened their pace and swung into the main street between lines of shops.

The people swarmed out of their houses in welcome, old people, young people, babies in arms. They shouted, while tears streamed down their faces, and they raised their fists in a timid salute.

With fists upraised, the men strode on, and the whole street echoed with their ringing song, in English and French —

"FROM OUR DEAD HEROES NEW LIFE ARISES."

In German and Italian, in Czech and Polish —

"NEW LIVES GO FORWARD IN ONE GREAT MASS,"

Swedish, Croatian, Hungarian, Greek —

"THE CANNON THUNDER, THE WHOLE EARTH TREMBLES,
BUT AT MADRID, *THEY SHALL NOT PASS!*"

MODERN AGE BOOKS

It would cost several thousand dollars to publish a single book. When this cost is spread over an edition of two or three thousand books, as is usually the case, the cost per book is reduced, but still remains high enough to put it beyond the reach of most readers.

Modern Age Books, Inc., is printing books in editions of thirty to a hundred thousand copies, which so reduces the cost per book that it is possible to sell them at prices ranging from twenty-five to ninety-five cents.

These low-priced books carry the imprint of the "Three Seals." Most of them are bound in sturdy paper covers. A few, for which a more durable format is desirable, carry a cloth binding. Books published by Modern Age for children are usually bound in boards.

Seal books cover a wide range, from detective fiction to serious political, social or economic studies. Among the latter is included the Modern World Series edited by Professor Louis M. Hacker of Columbia University. These are basic books in their respective fields, not dealing with subjects of merely current interest, but each focussed on a contemporary problem.

In addition to new publications not before issued in book form, Modern Age is also publishing a series of reprint editions of fine books, past and current.

MODERN AGE *presents:*

SEAL BOOKS

25 cents to 95 cents

NEW BOOKS

FICTION	ALL'S FAIR, *by Richard Wormser*
General	BABIES WITHOUT TAILS, *by Walter Duranty*
	OLD HELL, *by Emmett Gowen*
	THE STORY OF ODYSSEUS, *a new translation, by W. H. D. Rouse, with decorations by Lynd Ward*
	WALL OF MEN, *by William Rollins*
For Mystery Fans	DEATH SLAMS THE DOOR, *by Paul Cade*
	MURDER STRIKES THREE, *by David MacDuff*
NON-FICTION	FROM SPANISH TRENCHES, *compiled by Marcel Acier*
Current Affairs	KALTENBORN EDITS THE NEWS, *by H. V. Kaltenborn*
	THE LABOR SPY RACKET, *by Leo Huberman*
	MEN WHO LEAD LABOR, *by Bruce Minton and John Stuart*
	YOU HAVE SEEN THEIR FACES, *by Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White*
Biography	LAGUARDIA, A BIOGRAPHY, *by Jay Franklin*
Hand-reading	HOW TO KNOW PEOPLE BY THEIR HANDS, *by Josef Ranald*
History	THE UNITED STATES: A GRAPHIC HISTORY, *by Louis M. Hacker, Rudolph Modley and George R. Taylor*
Cook Books	MEALS ON WHEELS, *by Lou Willson and Olive Hoover*
	MOST-FOR-YOUR-MONEY COOK BOOK, *by Cora, Rose and Bob Brown*

Almanac	1938 ALMANAC FOR NEW YORKERS, *by the Federal Writers' Project*
Guide Book	U. S. ONE: FROM MAINE TO FLORIDA, *by the Federal Writers' Project*
Miscellaneous	TICKETS TO FORTUNE, *by Eric Bender*
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	PIXIE PETE'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, *by Phineas O'Mellish with illustrations by Sam Berman*
	RED FEATHER, *by Marjorie Fischer*
	YOU ARE . . . , *by Emery I. Gondor*

REPRINT EDITIONS

FICTION General	BLOOD OF THE CONQUERORS, *by Harvey Fergusson*
	THE DARING YOUNG MAN ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE, *by William Saroyan*
	GOD'S ANGRY MAN, *by Leonard Ehrlich*
	THE HONORABLE PICNIC, *by Thomas Raucat*
	LIGHTSHIP, *by Archie Binns*
	LITTLE CAESAR, *by William Riley Burnett*
	A PASSAGE TO INDIA, *by E. M. Forster*
	MR. WESTON'S GOOD WINE, *by T. F. Powys*
	THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, *by Morley Callaghan*
For Mystery Fans	THE LEAVENWORTH CASE, *by Anna Katharine Green*
	PERIL AT END HOUSE, *by Agatha Christie*
	SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS, *by Dorothy L. Sayers*
NON-FICTION	BURTON: ARABIAN NIGHTS ADVENTURER, *by Fairfax Downey*
	TRAVELS IN THE CONGO, *by André Gide*
	TWELVE AGAINST THE GODS, *by William Bolitho*

A SEAL BOOK